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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE NOVELLA AS MORAL FABLE:
A READING OF
THE BEAST IN THE JUNGLE,
THE VIRGIN AND THE GIPSY,
AND THE SECRET SHARER

BY

JANET L. MULLER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL (1987)

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Novella as Moral Fable: A Reading of The Beast in the Jungle, The Virgin and the Gipsy, and The Secret Sharer submitted by Janet L. Muller in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The modern novella (a form of prose fiction of intermediate length) has been shown to frequently take the shape of a moral fable. Henry James, D.H. Lawrence, and Joseph Conrad are writers of the early Twentieth Century who wrote many tales of this intermediate length, and whose moral concerns shaped their fiction. The novella, due to its length, concentration, and highly rhetorical use of form and literary devices, provided them with a perfect vehicle for the exploration of some of these issues. A close reading of three of their novellas, The Beast in the Jungle, The Virgin and the Gipsy, and The Secret Sharer, reveals a sense of morality which is both traditional and new. It is new in the sense that it advocates a morality based on individuality and consciousness, an ability to think for oneself, as opposed to reliance on conventional rules, moral axioms, or generalized "truths." It is still traditional in that in asserts the absolute necessity and value of man's relations with others, the need for commitment to other individuals and to one's community. As all three novellas deal with an issue of survival, it may be said that all three works are concerned with the moral survival of the individual as well as the community, and have attempted to define a morality which is relevant to contemporary society.

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INTRODUCTION

> . . . unless the reader quickly realises the kind of book he is dealing with his reactions to it are likely to be always a shade off-centre, his criticisms a trifle irrelevant.[1]

Since appreciation and relevant criticism begin with recognition, the first question for any reader ought to be, "What kind of thing is this?" The purpose of the present work is primarily to offer a relevant reading of these three novellas, works which may be best appreciated when read as moral fables. The secondary goal of this thesis is to offer, by way of these readings, a means of understanding the moral fable itself. There have been previous attempts to formulate very specific and almost scientific criteria for defining and classifying both the novella and the moral fable, but they often lead to arbitrary and misleading classifications and theories, and therefore unsatisfactory readings. The definition I would like to set down as a point of departure is that of the moral fable given by F.R. Leavis in his discussion of Hard Times:

> I need say no more by way of defining the moral fable than that in it the intention is peculiarly insistent, so that the representative significance of everything in the fable--character, episode, and so on--is immediately apparent as we read.[2]

For Leavis, the "peculiarly insistent intention" is sufficient to define the genre; but interestingly enough, he does not define the "intention." Another critic, Sheldon Sacks, has. His "apologue" may be considered synonymous with moral fable: "...in an apologue all elements of the work

are synthesized as a fictional example that causes us to feel, to experience as true, some formulable statement or statements about the universe."[3] Sacks's definition[4] emphasizes the declamatory, the didactic statement, in a way which seems narrow and reductive. "Formulable statements" suggest simple problems and simple solutions, deny the complexities with which these works grapple, and take the mystery out of the tale.

They also take the life out of the tale, for Sacks's "intention" dictates that interest in character and episode must be subordinated to interest in the "formulable statements"; our expectations and desires regarding the characters and their fates are secondary to our interest in the theme or attitudes expressed in the fable. This has led some critics who have pursued Sacks's lead to insist that this distinction is an "absolute" one.[5] Here I must disagree. Although it might be possible in some fables to say we care less about the fate of the characters than we do about the meaning of their fate, such a fable must be considered of a lesser interest. It is not possible to say we care less about Yvette's fate or Leggatt's or the captain's fate than we do about what their stories mean. In fact, I think Lawrence and Conrad intend our emotional involvement with these characters to be integral to the meaning, or significance, of the tale. The interest evoked and the emotion generated by a fable are part of the learning process integral to the genre. Neither the intention nor the emotional engagement need be considered--can be considered--subordinate. Conrad makes us understand individual responsibility because he makes us care that the captain will do the right thing by Leggatt, a man Conrad makes us respect rather than condemn.

The intention of the moral fable is sufficiently defined by the term itself--and there is no other word for it: moral. For this reason I will use the term "moral fable" and not "apologue," "fabulation" or any other euphemistic term. In this genre of literature it is simply not possible to ignore the moral element without denying the form itself.

If "moral" defines the intention, what then, defines "moral"? My rejection of Sack's "formulable statements" should be sufficient to convey what I do not mean by "moral." Moral does not define or prescribe "right" and "wrong," but defines the process by which one arrives at such judgments. An individual's moral sense is his ability to judge for himself, to draw these distinctions, as opposed to simple reliance on codes, rules, or "formulable statements." It is an ability which involves perception, interpretation, and evaluation. An individual's moral character is this ability to make judgments and then to stand behind them.

Morality is a matter of consciousness, individuality and commitment, and this is what we see enacted in the three novellas: The Beast in the Jungle, The Virgin and the Gipsy, and The Secret Sharer. John Marcher is a man whose consciousness is blocked by his egocentric, but passive, preoccupation with his own life. His failure to achieve consciousness results in a life that is void of meaning and commitment. With the virginal Yvette, D.H. Lawrence shows us a more successful struggle towards consciousness and individuality. But hers is a struggle not against her own ego, but against the collective ego of the "mob" and its conventional morality which has lost all meaning. Lawrence takes us one step closer towards a new or "finer" morality as he shows the individual letting go of the old and confronting her life and her

relations with a strengthened sense of her own individuality. In Joseph Conrad's story of a young captain's first command, we see a man's individuality put to the test, as he discovers the inadequacies of codes and laws when confronting life's moral ambiguities. His fidelity to his own conscience and his caring commitment to others defines a sense of duty which is moral in the fullest sense. Morality is, then, a way of knowing, and a way of living committed to that knowledge. Life itself, or at least a way of life, may be said to depend upon it.

It is the intention of the moral fable to convey this knowledge that cannot be stated, to convey "the sense of mystery surrounding our lives."[6] It is the kind of knowledge that is peculiar, extraordinary--what Joseph Conrad may have meant by the "subtle and resistless power [which] endows passing events with their true meaning, and [which] creates the moral, the emotional atmosphere of the place and time."[7] It is the "wonder and mystery" D.H. Lawrence defended when he said: "Somebody says that mystery is nothing, because mystery is something you can't know, and what you don't know is nothing to you. But there is more than one way of knowing."[8] And it is also that which Henry James defines as "romantic":

> . . . things that, with all the faculties in the world, all the wealth and all the courage and all the wit and all the adventure, we never can directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thoughts and our desire.[9]

In the three works discussed here, we find this peculiarity, this dramatic intrusion into each of an element of the Wonderful, or Fabulous, or Extraordinary, or Supernatural (e.g., the ghost-like appearance of the "secret sharer," or the fantastic decision to risk the ship in The Secret Sharer), and the way in which this is dealt with in

moral terms. The way in which this element is dealt with is neither easy nor comfortable. It may be called peculiar, or peculiarly insistent, in the sense that it is individual, as opposed to conventional or sentimental. So we may say that the moral fable is also recognizable by this peculiarity, a peculiarity which is both extraordinary and individual.

The "insistence" of the moral fable is the third and last way we recognize the genre. It refers to the shape of the thing, its structure and style. "Delight in design"[10] is one critic's way of putting it. The design is primarily a "framework within which [the fabulist] could present the problems that pressed on her, that life had shown her must be solved or managed, and which were more than merely personal."[11] Within this framework we find the pattern of significance whose chief characteristic is an "art of concentration that uses always the minimum--the loaded word and the uniquely representative act."[12] The pattern of significance may be evoked intellectually, through the use of irony, or conveyed "through the senses," as Joseph Conrad would say. The patterning may take the form of repetition on a small scale, such as repetition of certain words or images, or on a larger scale, such as a "tale within a tale." Or it may take the form of a puzzle or riddle. Whichever method the fabulist uses, his insistence engages the reader in an active interpretation of the pattern. This appeal to the reader is also part of the insistence, and it suggests another way in which we recognize the fable: the "authority of the shaper, the fabulator behind the fable."[13]

And finally, the insistence is the persistence with which the fabulist pursues a resolution for the problem or question confronting

him. In this way, the insistence becomes the intention, which is to say that the form becomes the content. So, when one understands all that is implied by "peculiarly insistent intention," one "need say no more by way of defining the moral fable."

* * * *

"Novella" refers here in quantitative terms to modern prose fiction of intermediate length, roughly 15,000 to 50,000 words,[14] falling somewhere between the short story and the novel. This genre has been referred to as nouvelle, novellette, Novelle, and short novel. This terminology and its history have been thoroughly discussed in an article by Gerald Gillespie entitled "Novella, Nouvelle, Novelle, Short Novel--A Review of Terms,"[15] in which he attempts to clarify the ambiguous terminology and suggests the adoption of the term "novella" to designate this particular intermediate prose fiction and to distinguish it from the short story and the novel. In the interest of consistency with his and following studies, and to maintain the distinction between the modern English novella and its European counterparts, the French nouvelle and the German Novelle, I will use "novella" throughout the present study. Also, it should perhaps be stated here that, while there are interesting similarities between the Renaissance novella of Bocaccio, Cervantes, and Chaucer, it is not the purpose of this study to pursue them.[16]

Although Gillespie declares that his essay is concerned with terminology and not "formal nuances," he does seem to focus on "special techniques of selectivity which distinguish the novella" from other genres of fiction.[17] These techniques include "extraordinary economy" and "symbolism . . . manipulated in virtually mathematical patterns."[18]

The orientation of several subsequent studies of the novella is distinctly formal and structural (as opposed to thematic), and appears to be following Gillespie's lead in investigating "special techniques."

In answer to Gillespie's question: "Is there any particular structure, or only a difference in length, that separates the novella from the shortest and longest fiction?"[19] Judith Liebowitz, in her book, Narrative Purpose and the Novella, attempts to "define the novella as a distinct narrative form."[20] She looks for a distinctive shaping principle, a principle she identifies in the novella's "narrative purpose." The narrative purpose Ms. Leibowitz isolates for the distinction of novellas is the "double effect of intensity and expansion." This means that the novella is simultaneously a highly concentrated and complex work, focussing consistently on one subject, with many suggested, but undeveloped, implications. This is achieved by means of what she calls a "theme-complex" and "repetitive structure," which she describes in terms of their function: to offer thematic complexity to the story's central conflict, and to intensify the theme by a process of redevelopment ("repetitive structure"). Instead of the novel's linear development, then, the novella redevelops its theme; it "turn[s] back on itself," rather than "proceed[ing] lineally to its conclusion."[21]

Leibowitz's theory of expansion and intensity resembles the remarks of other critics of the novella, particularly Henry James, whom she frequently quotes. The novella's main merit and sign is the effort "to do the complicated thing with a 'strong brevity and lucidity--to achieve, on behalf of the multiplicity, a certain science of control."[22] Robert Scholes, in his book on fables, says essentially the same thing, but

more simply: a good fable "is instructive in many things beyond its immediate moral."[23] In order to support and explain her theory, Leibowitz applies it to a number of German, French, American and English novellas. The flexibility of her theory makes it possible to accept her readings as plausible, but they are ultimately unsatisfactory because she does not tell us anything particularly worth knowing. This is perhaps because her definition of "narrative purpese" is markedly deficient.

Can the purpose of a narrative really be to expand and intensify? The goal she attributes to the novella is too strictly formal; and her preoccupation with the aesthetic effect of the novella inhibits her perception of the moral basis or intention of the novella, which must surely have something to do with "narrative purpose." She is actually talking about narrative techniques; and her discussion is ultimately shallow because she fails to show the effect of these techniques on the overall narrative purpose, or intention, of the work.

In another 1977 study of the novella, Forms of the Modern Novella, Mary Doyle Springer attempts to define the genre by its "formal functions": "to achieve a definition of the novella less by what it is than by what it does: a series of formal functions, which can best be achieved at that length, functions which cause authors intuitively to choose that length."[24] Because form for Springer "does not mean structure alone," her readings are more useful than those of Leibowitz. However, her reliance on the fictional classifications set down by Sheldon Sacks, "action," "apologue" and "satire," results in some arbitrary and misleading categorizations and readings.

Springer notes that apologue (a form which includes allegory and

fable) is an extremely common form of the novella, and her best chapters deal with the novella as "apologue." Trouble arises when she attempts to make a case for the other categories of "satires" and "actions." Apologue characteristics keep showing up in actions and satires, but Springer fails to note the significance: how easy it is to write about the novella as apologue, and how much more difficult it is to deal with the novella as anything else.

Springer's other problem is her emphasis on Sacks's "formulable statements":

> . . . if apologue, as a particular form of fiction, intends as its unifying--thus dominant--principle the 'maximizing' of the truth of a statement or statements, then that statement must be caused to become the dominant effective concern of the reader. If this is to be successfully achieved, What Happens to Whom, and the artistic means for presenting these, must bend to the requirements of the message the story wishes, before all else, to leave with us.[18]

Again, I must argue that "What Happens to Whom" can never be subordinate to any "statement." What happens to whom is the statement--although I would prefer to substitute the word "moral" for "statement." If we lose interest in What Happens To Whom, we lose interest in the fable. If, on the other hand, we become too interested in What Happens to Whom, we lose interest in the moral. So it is not a matter of subordinating What Happens to Whom, but only keeping it from getting out of control.

Springer is not the first critic or reader to note the similarities between the moral fable and the novella. Many of the characteristics identified by a number of critics as belonging to the novella are those outlined in my discussion of the moral fable. The length, of course, lends itself to the art of concentration: "the loaded word and the uniquely representative act"; and the "shapely" novella is much more

given to intricate patterns. Like any image, the smaller the area of concentration, the greater the resolution. The structure of the plot is, therefore, more pronounced, more significant. But the art of concentration which shows up in the structure is merely indicative of the concentration of the content, or story. For the narrow scope must be the predominant characteristic of the novella, a focus around a single issue, an issue which is, more often than not, moral.

There is likewise an interesting relationship between the novellas written by a given author and his longer novels. Henry James, D.H. Lawrence, and Joseph Conrad are writers whose moral concerns are expressed in all of their prose fiction. But it is in their shorter works that the focus narrows to a smaller area, and instead of merely illuminating the problem (which may have arisen elsewhere, in a longer work), a deeper analysis and solution are attempted. The moral fable then becomes like a creative workshop where the writer defines, works on, and possibly resolves the problem. Examples of this have been noted by a number of critics:

> Conrad, as we have seen, broke off Lord Jim to write "Heart of Darkness" [a novella]; and clearly he did so out of an impulse to isolate and explore with a high concentration what had revealed itself as a commanding interest while he was writing his novel. There is an equally notable chronological relationship between "The Secret Sharer" and Under Western Eyes. . . .[36]

In Under Western Eyes, Joseph Conrad deals with the themes of moral isolation, loyalty and betrayal in the broader context of the 19th-century Russian police state and fanatical revolutionaries. In The Secret Sharer he explores it more precisely. This particular critic goes on to say that The Secret Sharer even "provides a simplified solution to the issue central to Under Western Eyes."[37] A solution it does clearly

provide. But to call it "simplified" is, in my view, a serious misreading, as well as a gross injustice to Conrad, The Secret Sharer, and the novella itself.

Such a case might also be made for Henry James's The Beast in the Jungle, which appeared in the same year as The Ambassadors:

> There is a clear connection between the two works. The central scene of The Ambassadors is the scene laid in Gloriani's Parisian garden, where Lambert Strether, another poor sensitive gentleman, proclaims his conversion to the doctrine of experience. The lesson drawn by Strether is that "it doesn't so much matter what you do in particular so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what have you had? . . . Live, live!" The same lesson is drawn by Marcher when with the wane of his hopes he comes to realize that "it wouldn't have been failure to be bankrupt, dishonoured, pilloried, hanged; it was failure not to be anything. . . ." Nowhere in James is this lesson of the primary uses of life demonstrated with the concentration achieved in The Beast in the Jungle.[3.8]

In The Beast in the Jungle, James defines what it means to "Live!"

The novella is, therefore, no less complex, but it is complex in a different way. The method of the novella-writer is like that of a photographer who, after taking a group photograph, moves in closer to study one member of the group. The complexity is found in the precision afforded by a closer look, a sharper focus. The novellas of these writers are therefore very important to their work as a whole; and, as moral fables, they offer intelligent and valuable insights into the problems which press upon us all.

Notes

[1] Arnold Kettle, An Introduction to the English Novel (New York: Perennial Library, Harper & Rowe, 1968), p. 44.

[2] F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1948), p. 259.

[3] Sheldon Sacks, "Golden Birds and Dying Generations," in Comparative Literature Studies, 6 (September, 1969) 276-77.

[4] This definition has served as a basis for David Richter and Mary Doyle Springer, who have pursued studies in both the novella and apologue, or fable.

[5] David Richter, Fable's End, Completeness and Closure in Rhetorical Fiction (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 10.

[6] Joseph Conrad, "The Condition of Art" in The Portable Joseph Conrad (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 706.

[7] Conrad, Portable, p. 707.

[8] D.H. Lawrence, Selected Literary Criticism, ed. by Anthony Beal (New York: Viking Press, 1964), p. 8.

[9] Henry James, The Art of the Novel, Critical Prefaces (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), pp. 31-32.

[10] Robert Scholes, The Fabulators (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 10.

[11] Q.D. Leavis, "Intro.," Silas Marner, by George Eliot (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), pp. 13-14.

[12] Q.D. Leavis, p. 14.

[13] Scholes, p. 10.

[14] Mary Doyle Springer, Forms of the Modern Novella (Chicago & Los Angeles: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 10.

[15] Gerald Gillespie, "Novella, Nouvelle, Novelle, Short Novel--A Review of Terms," in Neophilologus (1967), pp. 117-27 and 225-30.

[16] Robert J. Clements and Joseph Gibaldi, Anatomy of the Novella (New York: New York University Press, 1977).

[17] Gillespie, p. 226.

[18] Gillespie, p. 227.

[19] Gillespie, p. 122.

[20] Judith Leibowitz, Narrative Purpose in the Novella (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), p. 9.

[21] Leibowitz, p. 49.

[22] Leibowitz, p. 51.

[23] Scholes, p. 6.

[24] Springer, p. 9.

[25] Springer, p. 19.

[26] J.I.M. Stewart, "Chapter XI: 'The Secret Sharer' and The Shadow Line," in Joseph Conrad (London & Harlow: Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., 1968), p. 240.

[27] Stewart, p. 240.

[28] Philip Rahv, ed., The Great Short Novels of Henry James (New York: Dial Press, Inc., 1944), pp. 751-52.

CHAPTER ONE

The Beast in the Jungle

> . . . and it may be said that in his account of Marcher's doom James created the unifying fable summing up the predicament of all those figures of his imagination who forfeit their allotted share of experience through excessive pride or delicacy or rationality.[1]

Although Henry James does not specifically define his "nouvelles" as moral fables, the terms in which he does define his shorter works are very similar to the terms in which the moral fable is defined here. He considered this form to be quite distinct from both the short story and the novel, and the distinction was based on more than word count. In her study of James's novellas, The Nouvelle of Henry James in Theory and Practice, Lauren T. Cowdery finds:

> The distinctions on which James bases his definition of the nouvelle--which is expressed in terms of the difference between anecdote and nouvelle--are the opposition of story to subject, anecdotal treatment to development, and ultimately the perception of real truth to the intuition of romantic truth.[2] [underlining mine]

The "anecdote" for James "consists, ever, of something that has oddly happened to someone, and the first of its duties is to point directly to the person whom it so distinguishes."[3] This someone, Cowdery explains, "is interesting for external reasons--not because of the quality of his or her consciousness, but because of the adventures in which he or she plays a starring role."[4] The anecdote is primarily concerned with story and plot as represented by the real, or "the things we cannot possibly not know."[5] It concentrates on adventures, and it sounds very much like

Springer's (and Sacks's) "action":

> a work organized so that it introduces characters about whose fates we are made to care, in unstable relationships which are then further complicated until the complication is finally resolved by the removal of the represented instability.[6] [underlining mine]

James's "nouvelle" must begin with "an excellent anecdote . . . in order to succeed as a nouvelle. . . ."[7] It must begin with a good story, realistic in that it corresponds to our sense of external events, or reality as "things we cannot possibly not know."

Then these elements are "developed" in such a way as to bring out, or point to, the moral or human significance, what James refers to as the "subject." This "subject" may be defined as "some direct impression or perception of life."[8] It belongs to romantic experience, romantic denoting "things that with all the faculties in the world . . . we never can directly know,"[9] "because it is concerned with the significance of human events"[10] [underlining mine], as opposed to merely the events themselves. This subject is not a character, but an idea evoked by the character or his actions and interactions with other characters.

The subject may therefore be said to be the nouvelle's "intention." A moral subject for James is one that is " . . . genuine, . . . [and] sincere, the result of some direct impression or perception of life. . . . the 'moral' sense of a work of art [depends] on the amount of felt life in producing it."[11] The development of the subject is its pattern of insistence; and its romantic appeal corresponds to the moral fable's peculiar or extraordinary quality. And like the moral fable, the "nouvelle" maintains a strong tension and balance between its moral dimension and its story, never subordinating one to the other.

The Beast In The Jungle is not only not merely an "anecdote," that is, a simple account of "What happens to Whom," it is in fact, an anti-anecdote, as it takes for its subject the whole idea of "happenings." And anyone who looks in it for an anecdotal plot (something oddly happening to someone) will be as frustrated as Marcher waiting for an anecdotal life ("something rare and strange . . . that was . . . to happen to [him]").[13]

It is not surprising, then, that Mary Doyle Springer, who classifies Beast as an "action," should miss the point of the story, as is evidenced in the following quotation:

> The quality (as against the amount) of irony in The Beast in the Jungle is immense--more so than in any other novella that comes to mind. Marcher, in his dignity as protagonist, does not understand May Bartram partly because she is for too long where he is, drawn into a struggle to uncover significance where there is no significance at all. She dies of her gradual awareness that his great secret is nothingness, but she has elevated the pathos of that nothingness and of Marcher's struggle toward nothing, by her loving involvement.'[13]

Springer reads Beast as a degenerative tragedy, a sub-category of "actions," because of the downward movement she defines by May Bartram's death and John Marcher's pathetic ending. It is indeed a tragedy, but the tragedy is not that there was no significance to Marcher's life, but instead that he missed the significance of his life, because he missed the experience of his life, which was, in fact, May Bartram's "loving involvement." The fact that he eventually glimpses this should not obscure his continuing lack of understanding, which is obvious in Marcher's concluding that he was "the man to whom nothing on earth was to have happened."[14]

To say May dies of a "gradual awareness that his great secret is

nothingness" is to miss the irony of this statement, for Marcher's "revelation" is nothing more than a continuation of his failure from the beginning. He "realizes" nothing was to have happened to him, when what he should have realized is that he lacked the sensitivity, awareness and humanity to comprehend what did happen to him. Marcher remains to the end a static character. Far from being a "Marcher," he makes no advancement in understanding what life is all about. However, the reader should understand the lesson if he has understood the function of James's irony, an irony which Mary Doyle Springer herself recognizes as one of the chief characteristic of this novella, but then fails to see how it works.

Springer is not the only critic to have misread the ending by maintaining that Marcher comes to the realization that his great secret is nothingness, and that he is consequently destroyed, as was May Bartram, by that realization. The point I wish to argue is that the distance between the narrator's and Marcher's perception persists until the end, at which point Marcher is no closer to realization of the truth about himself or his life than he was at the beginning. A reading of the text as a moral fable, following its pattern of significance will prove this, as the revelation of Marcher's character will reveal the moral or human significance the author is exploring or developing.

The cause of May Bartram's death is revealed in the development of this tale, and especially in the final image we have of her. The image James creates of May Bartram is one of deterioration, her wasting away from a disease of the blood (the essence of life). One can pursue the metaphor (as one must in moral fables) to see that May ceases to exist because of a deficiency in her life which is due to Marcher's never

really acknowledging her existence; he wastes her instead of saving her. The question of what it is that "saves" one in this life is the "subject" of this novella, as it is of several others:[15] the "social relation."[16] It is that which determines existence and saves one from desolation, waste, and an empty existence. It is that which May Bartram is denied. Her physical death is representative of the life John Marcher denied both her and himself.

What Cowdery says of The Coxen Fund is equally true of The Beast in the Jungle: it "is a complex, carefully wrought nouvelle in which 'mere narrative' is forsaken in favor of such romantic structural devices as evocation, irony. . . ."[17] If we pursue the ironical insistence of this tale, we cannot fail to see how it reveals how a man loses his "allotted share of experience" due to his obsessive and selfish preoccupation with finding it.

This irony is evident in the presentation of Marcher's thoughts and actions. James conveys his moral attitude towards Marcher through the use of a highly ironical narrator, who shows us Marcher's opinion of himself in a way which gives us the narrator's opinion at the same time. He tells us not only how Marcher sees himself, but how Marcher views his world and his relation to it. This is always accompanied by the truth, not as Marcher sees it, but as the narrator sees it. This is achieved not only by the irony of the narrator, but by the development of May's consciousness as well. James's limited omniscient narrator shows us Marcher's thoughts, but not May's. However, we understand May's thoughts because we understand her actions and words. That Marcher does not is made obvious not only by his actions and words, but also by the narrator's presentation of his thoughts; and it is one of the ways in

which James keeps the reader distanced from Marcher's character (or avoids pointing too directly to him) and develops the irony of the novella.

The tale of John Marcher is framed by another consciousness, that of the narrator, whom we can take, I think, to represent James. The frame device goes all the way back to the early novellas of Boccaccio and Cervantes, but it is also a characteristic device of the moral fable in that it establishes a relationship between the author and reader, the relationship being of a pedagogical nature. A writer of James's skill and subtlety goes to great lengths to present a moral without moralizing, to let the reader discover the truth for himself. In Beast, Henry James engages the reader in the subject by means of a riddle with which the characters themselves are preoccupied (and which is the story). Through his use of irony, James keeps the reader's interest balanced between the fate of the characters and the meaning of the riddle. The irony persists until the end when the reader makes the discovery which continues to elude Marcher.

The basic "anecdote" of Beast, the "What Happens To Whom," is the basic "Boy Meets Girl" plot: John Marcher meets May Bartram on an afternoon visit to a magnificent country estate; however, it is actually the second time they have met. But this "boy" is different; he claims for himself a rare sensitivity and perception of some extraordinary fate in store for him. This is what we learn of Marcher from May Bartram, who is merely repeating what Marcher told her years ago:

> "You said you had had from your earliest time, as the deepest thing within you, the sense of being kept for something rare and strange, possibly prodigious and terrible, that was sooner or later to happen to you, that you had in your bones the foreboding and the conviction of, and that would perhaps

overwhelm you."[18]

But James shows us a man who is neither sensitive nor perceptive. The fact that it is May and not Marcher who first states the great secret allows James to be wonderfully ironic about Marcher: how could it be that a sensitive and perceptive man would have forgotten that he had once shared the greatest secret of his life with an attractive young woman? James also shows us a man who has some mistaken ideas about relevance. He shows us Marcher groping for something that might have happened between them in the past, something which would give enough relevance to the relationship to resume it now:

> Marcher said to himself that he ought to have rendered her some service--saved her from a capsized boat in the bay, or at least recovered her dressing bag, filched from her cab, in the streets of Naples, by a lazzarone with a stiletto. Or it would have been nice if he could have been taken with fever, alone, at his hotel, and she could have come to look after him, to write to his people, to drive him out in convalescence. Then they would be in possession of the something or other that their actual show seemed to lack.[19]

Marcher's idea of something happening, then, is related to the world of superficial, external events, to the world of anecdote. When he does learn that he told her his secret, his response is, "No wonder they couldn't have met as if nothing happened."[20] That Marcher does not understand what must have passed between them on the more human level, something so deep as to allow him to share his secret with her, is an indication that he will not understand or perceive what will happen between them now. Coupled with the fact that he forgot that he even told her his secret, this should tell the reader that this is not a sensitive and perceptive man.

May Bartram accepts Marcher's proposal to watch with him, and thus the first chapter ends with a kind of parody on the conventional boy-

meets-girl anecdote: not "Come live with me and share my life," but "Come watch with me." The relationship, like Marcher's life, is one based on anticipation of, and suspension from, action, rather than action itself. In this first chapter, James engages our interest in John Marcher and in What Is Going To Happen to him, but offers us a few signals to be suspicious of him as a "hero."

In Chapter II, the irony intensifies as James continues to explore Marcher's perceptions and develop the mystery of his fate. The gap between the narrator's perceptions and Marcher's perception widens, and the distance between reader and Marcher is effectively established in the narrator's account of Marcher's idea of his own generosity.

> He had thought himself, so long as nobody knew [his secret], the most disinterested person in the world, carrying his concentrated burden, his perpetual suspense, ever so quietly, holding his tongue about it, giving others no glimpse of it nor of its effect upon his life, asking of them no allowance and only making on his side all those that were asked. He had disturbed nobody with the queerness of having to know a haunted man, though he had had moments of rather special temptation on hearing people say that they were "unsettled." If they were as unsettled as he was--he who had never been settled for an hour in his life--they would know what it meant. Yet it wasn't, all the same, for him to make them, and he listened to them civilly enough. This was why he had such good--though possibly such rather colorless--manners; this was why, above all, he could regard himself, in a greedy world, as decently--as in fact, perhaps even a little sublimely--unselfish. Our point is accordingly that he valued this character quite sufficiently to measure his present danger of letting it lapse, against which he promised himself to be much on his guard.[21]

What James has given us here is a perfect portrait of a totally egocentric, "pedantic and portentous"[22] man--the very thing which a couple of pages later the narrator tells us Marcher prides himself on <u>not</u> being. The reader rightly questions the insight and "disinterestedness" of a character who can call himself "sublimely

unselfish," and who can be so vain as well as blind; this doubt will make the reader suspicious of Marcher's ability to perceive or know anything. Therefore, when Marcher offers as proof to himself of his "sublime unselfishness" the fact that he does not marry May Bartram, the reader suspects it to be evidence of the exact opposite. Here again, the narrator conveys Marcher's thinking in terms which allow the reader to see things which Marcher obviously does not. Marcher feels he cannot marry May with his prodigious fate, his "Beast in the Jungle," ready to spring. James's irony is turned against Marcher once more, as he contemplates his "Beast in the Jungle" in the same terms in which he regards his relationship with May Bartram:

> It [their relationship] simply existed; had sprung into being with her first penetrating question to him. . . . It signified little whether the crouching Beast were destined to slay him or to be slain. The definite point was the inevitable spring of the creature; and the definite lesson from that was that a man of feeling didn't cause himself to be accompanied by a lady on a tiger hunt.[23] [underlining mine]

Marcher's failure to draw any connection between the two things is underscored on the following page when Marcher jokingly suggests that her coming to town may be "the great thing"[24] itself. John Marcher becomes a character from whom the reader expects the opposite of what he says to be true. Most of the time, he is wrong in his perceptions; and when he is right, he does not know it!

The reader does not, then, look for great percipience from Marcher. May Bartram, on the other hand, emerges in this chapter as a character who understands, feels, and means much more than she says. And as we struggle along with John Marcher to comprehend her enigmatic remarks, we begin to suspect in this chapter that we will have more success than Marcher. This is the effect of James's irony.

James offers further proof of his character's misguided thinking and at the same time introduces a major clue to the riddle, and an important aspect of the subject, in Marcher's preoccupation with appearing "indistinguishable from other men."[25] He is concerned about appearing "queer" and is grateful to May Bartram for making him appear like other men because he has a friendship with an attractive woman. But it seems to be a strange concern, and the reader suspects that Marcher's concern to be like other men is as misguided as his conviction of his sublime unselfishness. What is essentially wrong with this concern is that it is focussed again on appearances, external realities (just as his expensive birthday gifts are superficial substitutes for what would be true generosity--the gift of himself). What Marcher should be concerned with is not <u>appearing</u> to be like other men, but actually <u>being</u> like other men, actually <u>being</u> part of the human experience. And what that means, we begin to suspect, is the answer to May's riddle and the "subject" or moral of James's "nouvelle" or fable.

Another pattern starts to become apparent in this chapter as we watch Marcher trying to comprehend May's meaning. When Marcher expresses concern that May's "curiosity is not being particularly repaid,"[26] she intimates that it perhaps has been repaid: ". . . of course one's fate is coming, of course it <u>has</u> come, in its own form and its own way, all the while."[27] In this conversation, as in almost all of them, Marcher fails to understand her:

> "Only you know, the form and the way in your case were to have been--well, something so exceptional and, as one may say, so particularly <u>your</u> own."
>
> Something in this made him look at her with suspicion. "You say 'were to <u>have</u> been,' as if in your heart you had begun to doubt."
>
> "Oh!" she vaguely protested.

> "As if you believed," he went on, "that nothing will now take place."
>
> She shook her head slowly, but rather inscrutably. "You're far from my thought."
>
> He continued to look at her. "What then is the matter with you?"
>
> "Well, . . . the matter with me is simply that I'm more sure than ever my curiosity, as you call it, will be but too well repaid."[28]

Her words are certainly enigmatic, but at no point does she even suggest that she believes nothing will take place. All she suggests is that "it" will not necessarily be the kind of thing he was expecting; and there is the implication that she does expect he will eventually understand what she does, what "it" is. But Marcher misunderstands her, and unfortunately, some critics have followed his lead. But it is difficult to see how anyone could be in line with Marcher's thinking, when James has created such an ironic distance between the reader and Marcher. Consider the final part of their conversation in Chapter II:

> "I am, then, a man of courage?"
>
> "That's what you were to show me."
>
> He still, however, wondered. "But doesn't the man of courage know what he's afraid of--or not afraid of? I don't know that, you see. I don't focus it. I can't name it. I only know I'm exposed."
>
> "Yes, but exposed--how shall I say?--so directly. So intimately. That's surely enough."
>
> "Enough to make you feel, then--as what we may call the end of our watch--that I'm not afraid?"
>
> "You're not afraid. But it isn't," she said, "the end of our watch. That is it isn't the end of yours. You've everything still to see."
>
> "Then why haven't you?" he asked. He had had, all along, today, the sense of her keeping something back, and he still had it. As this was his first impression of that, it made a kind of date. The case was more marked as she didn't at first answer; which in turn made him go on. "You know something I don't." Then his voice, for that of a man of courage, trembled a little [underlining mine]. "You know what's to happen." Her silence, with the face she showed, was almost a confession--it made him sure. "You know, and you're afraid to tell me. It's so bad that you're afraid I'll find out."[29]

May's compassionate ambiguity is clearly not James's, and he leaves us

little doubt that this is a man who hasn't a clue as to what courage is, or what truly saves one in this existence. The narrator has so clearly intruded in this passage with his irony that one is left to wonder whose final words, "You'll never find out,"[30] we are left with--May's or James's. And we read on not merely to discover if this prophecy is true, but also, if it is, to learn why he never finds out.

From here on, the tale revolves[31] around the riddle. The insistence of the tale is evoked through the riddle, and the "subject" of The Beast in the Jungle is hidden in it. It is this riddle which gives both structure and meaning to the tale, and the reader is drawn into the story by participating in resolving the mystery. He is not given the solution, but must find it or not--as must Marcher.

As Chapter III opens, Marcher is reassuring himself of his selflessness in his relationship with May: "His point was made, he thought, by his not eternally insisting with her on himself."[32] James's method is repeatedly to have Marcher thinking or telling himself he is unselfish and then to present actual evidence of his outrageous selfishness. This maintains the gap between Marcher's self-image and the reader's image of him. It also focusses the reader's attention on Marcher's selfishness, which is a key element to the riddle.

So when Marcher asks May, "'What is it that saves you?'" and the narrator explains, "saved her, he meant, from that appearance of variation from the usual human type,"[33] we suspect that behind his apparent concern for his friend, there is a desire to return to his true obsession, his fate. But if Marcher is keeping his question in the foreground, so is James his: what is it that saves anyone?

The structure of the argument suggests that the question of being saved is ultimately one of survival, "moral survival"; but Marcher fails to understand this. May, however, seems to comprehend and mean much more than her friend. The conversations between the two take the form of a riduling, and, as it becomes increasingly clear that she has answers and Marcher does not, their relationship becomes that of insight versus ignorance. And as this is a moral fable, one may even regard their characters as the personification of these two states of being. But it is not enough to see this; one must understand the basis of Marcher's ignorance in order to grasp the whole fable. What keeps getting in Marcher's way of crossing over from ignorance to insight is his egotism. Not only can we deduce this from the narrator's irony towards Marcher, but we can see it built right into the structure of James's fable:

> "I never said," May Bartram replied, "that it hadn't made me talked about." [This is in answer to his question of what saves her.]
>
> "Ah, well, then, you're not 'saved.'"
>
> "It has not been a question for me. If you've had your woman, I've had," she said, "my man."
>
> "And you mean that makes you all right?"
>
> She hesitated. "I don't know why it shouldn't make me--humanly, which is what we're speaking of--as right as it makes you."
>
> "I see," Marcher returned. "'Humanly,' no doubt, as showing that you're living for something. Not, that is, just for me and my secret."
>
> May Bartram smiled. "I don't pretend it exactly shows that I'm not living for you. It's my intimacy with you that's in question."
>
> He laughed as he saw what she meant. "Yes, but since, as you say, I'm only, so far as people make out, ordinary, you're--aren't you?--no more than ordinary either. You help me to pass for a man like another. So if I <u>am</u>, as I understand you, you're not compromised. Is that it?"
>
> She had another hesitation, but she spoke clearly enough. "That's it. It's all that concerns me--to help you to pass for a man like another."
>
> "How kind, how beautiful, you are to me! How shall I ever repay you?"
>
> She had her last grave pause, as if there might be a choice of ways. But she chose. "By going on as you are."[34]

This is typical of their enigmatic conversations, in which the reader becomes confused as to what is actually being said. It is not clear to the reader what May Bartram means by her cryptic answers. What is clear to the reader is that John Marcher does not understand her either. So that remarks like, "He laughed as he saw what she meant," are only more of the narrator's irony. This is made clear by May's responses to Marcher. Before every reply, she "hesitates," "smiles," and "pauses"; these gestures all signal the lack of spontaneous communication and understanding between May and Marcher, as well as indicating to the reader that there is something more in her consciousness than she is sharing. She is the mystery; however, Marcher is still looking for his mystery elsewhere, in his "Jungle."

All that Marcher is really interested in finding out from May is what she might know about his fate that he does not. His selfish preoccupation begins to take on grotesque proportions when he learns that May is ill. He congratulates himself for not thinking first of his own personal loss, but hers: how "cruel" it would be for her to have to die before discovering "it," since her whole life has been dedicated to watching and waiting for "it": "These reflections, as I say, refreshed his generosity."[35] But the narrator goes on to tell us that even this generosity "lapsed for him," and Marcher became "disconcerted" at the "threat of much inconvenience"[36] that her death would mean to him. This supreme egotism is the source of Marcher's failure and the subject of James's tale: "It was characteristic of the inner detachment he had hitherto so successfully cultivated and to which our whole account of him is a reference. . ."[37] (underlining mine).

The results of this cultivated detachment are ironically presented

on the next page when, since he is so "disconcerted" about her possible death, Marcher wonders "if the great accident would take form now as nothing more than his being condemned to see this charming woman, this admirable friend, pass away from him,"[38] Marcher, as usual, even when he gets into the general area of the truth, gets it wrong. He suspects her death might be the great accident which is to mark his life, overlooking the possibility that it might have been not her death, but her life. And as usual, his confusion is linked to his selfishness: "He had never so unreservedly qualified her as while confronted in thought with such a possibility."[39] In other words, he does not acknowledge her or value her for herself, but only if she should turn out to be part of his great fate, instead of realizing that her value is his fate. So just as he is about to attain some understanding, he is blinded again by his egotism. He believes if her death were to be the great thing, it would be an "abject anticlimax. It would represent, as connected with his past attitude, a drop of dignity under the shadow of which his existence could only become the most grotesque of failures."[40]

Marcher comes very close to understanding at the end of this chapter, when he considers that it might actually be "overwhelmingly too late,"[41] that nothing is going to happen to him. But even in this bit of insight, James points to Marcher's fatal ignorance:

> It wouldn't have been failure to be bankrupt, dishonored, pilloried, hanged; it was failure not to be anything. And so, in the dark valley into which his path had taken its unlooked-for twist, he wondered not a little as he groped. He didn't care what awful crash might overtake him, with what ignominy or what monstrosity he might yet be associated--since he wasn't, after all, too utterly old to sufffer--if it would only be decently proportionate to the posture he had kept, all his life, in the promised presence of it. He had but one desire left--that he shouldn't have been "sold."[42]

There are two main problems here in his thinking: one is his persistent egotism, his posturing; and his passive relation to life. He has thought all along of his fate as something to happen to him, and this passivity is expressed in his fear that "he shouldn't have been 'sold.'" Marcher, ultimately, has it wrong again. His passive "detachment . . . to which our whole account of him is a reference" has kept him outside the human or social community and distant from the experience of living. Marcher has it partly right: failure is "not to be anything," but he fails to understand that it is precisely his detachment that keeps him from being anything. It is his ability to reach partial truths which makes Marcher an interesting character, and his limitation which makes him a tragic one. The clues of the riddle are coming together in Marcher's ignorance, selfishness, and passivity. Through the irony of his narrator, James shows us what keeps Marcher from knowledge.

The idea of the riddle comes more into focus in Chapter IV, as James presents May to us as a sphinx. If she appears so to Marcher, the significance is even greater to the reader, as it has been all along. To Marcher she is a sphinx because of the enigma she represents to him. But James counts on the reader's knowledge of the mythical sphinx which is the head of a woman and the body of a lion. And it destroyed all who could not answer its riddle. May, therefore, embodies the riddle; perhaps that much Marcher realizes. But the reader cannot fail to equate the sphinx with the Beast in the Jungle, since what is the beast in the jungle other than the lion? Using the simple equation, May Bartram (A) = The Sphinx (B); The Sphinx = The Beast in the Jungle (C), and The Beast in the Jungle = Marcher's Fate (D), the riddle is solved.

If A=B, B=C, and C=D, then A=D.

May Bartram is Marcher's fate.

Marcher's fear of never knowing his fate eclipses his fear of losing May. Even as he sees that she is dying, he continues to badger her about his fate. The conversation of this chapter (each chapter is centered around a conversation) is enigmatic and cryptic, and the only way the reader can make any sense of it is to understand that they are talking about two different things. And meaning can be found only be following May's words:

> "Oh, yes, there were times when we did go far." He caught himself in the act, speaking as if it were all over. Well, he wished it were; and the consummation depended, for him, clearly, more and more on his companion.
>
> But she had now a soft smile. "Oh, far ----!"
>
> It was oddly ironic. "Do you mean you're prepared to go further?"
>
> She was frail and ancient and charming as she continued to look at him, yet it was rather as if she had lost the thread.
>
> "Do you consider that we went so far?"
>
> "Why I thought it was the point you were just making--that we had looked most things in the face."
>
> "Including each other?"[43]

The distance between their thinking is painfully evident as May tries to turn this conversation away from the question of his great fate and towards their relationship. It alerts the reader to what has really been at issue here from the start--their involvement with one another. Then we see the extent of May's "loving involvement" as she backs down, realizing that understanding might be too painful at this point for him. Here, in May's compassion, is that great selflessness that Marcher claimed for himself. But Marcher doggedly turns the topic back to the question of his great secret:

> "You know something I don't. You've showed me that before."
>
> These last words affected her, he could see in a moment, remarkably, and she spoke with firmness.
>
> "I've shown you, my dear, nothing."

> He shook his head. "You can't hide it."
> "Oh, oh!" May Bartram murmured over what she couldn't hide. It was almost a smothered groan.
> . . . .
> "It would be the worst," she finally let herself say. "I mean the thing that I've never said."[44]

The critics who believe that the thing she has never said is that nothing was ever to have happened to him have obviously been as confused by May Bartram's words as Marcher is. To believe that Marcher's great secret is nothingness is to remain aligned with Marcher's consciousness, which any sensitivity to James's irony should have rendered impossible.

May's ambiguous statements to Marcher work up to a poignant revelation which is made tragic by Marcher's inability to comprehend her meaning. She responds to Marcher's accusation that she is abandoning him in a loving and symbolic gesture: "'No, no!' she repeated. 'I'm with you--don't you see?--still.'"[45] She is with him still, or he still does not see? In contrast to Marcher's pompous pretentions, James shows us generosity in May's painful last effort to save Marcher. But Marcher is again prevented from understanding because of his egotism (he only sees her as "capable still of helping him"[46]) and by his obsession with his "fate." "Then tell me if I shall consciously suffer," Marcher pleads with her. To which she responds, "Never!"[47] He will never suffer, or she will never tell him? Marcher hears the former; but the reader must consider the latter. May follows his thinking and challenges the idea that never to suffer is best, and again the reader senses that James is playing with the two meanings of "suffer": to suffer pain or to experience something.

May, who has suffered, in both senses of the word, knows that experience, even if it is painful, is better than failure to experience;

and she hopes here that Marcher will finally grasp this. When he says, "I see--if I don't suffer!" we think he has glimpsed this truth. But May Bartram is right to doubt him. "You see what?" she asks. "Why, what you mean--what you've always meant."[48] But Marcher ultimately fails to understand what she means, what she is trying to say, and what she has "always meant" to him.

May assures him that he has not been wrong in thinking that something great was to happen to him, and then she presents that "something great" right before his eyes and tells him, "It's never too late."[49] She gets up and stands before him. This is the "spring" for which Marcher has waited, but James has rendered it in terms too subtle for his protagonist to perceive. (Recall that Marcher only recognizes the kind of melodramatic happenings he wishes had marked their earliest meeting in Chapter I.) Blind to her meaning, incapable of perception, Marcher waits to be told. His passivity and egotism are still in the way: " . . . the fear that she would die without giving him light."[50]

> "Don't you know--now?"
> "Now----?" [and finally in impatience, Marcher exclaims] "I know nothing."[51]

As she goes out the door, Marcher is still insisting: "What then has happened?" To which May wearily replies, "What was to."[52] This does not mean "nothing."

Marcher's distress over May's imminent death is dominated by his preoccupation with his fate, and the fact that she knows what it is, or has been, and has not yet told him. And ill as she is, Marcher badgers her to reveal it to him. When she tells him it has come, he argues that he has not been aware of it. With her customary hesitations and enigmatic smiles, May tells him, " . . . your not being aware of it is

the strangeness in the strangeness. It's the wonder of the wonders."[53] Her words here reflect the romantic kind of knowledge James is exploring, "things that, with all the faculties in the world, . . . we never can directly know; the things that reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire."[54] Her enigmatic answers and statements embody James's theory that these "things" cannot be merely narrated, but must be evoked. It is impossible for May to tell Marcher in the explicit terms he understands. Marcher is a man who needs "formulable statements"; and May Bartram's art, like the art of this fable itself, is far more subtle than that. What she (and the fable) represent is another way of knowing.

May's own way of naming his insensitivity is to tell him, "You take your 'feelings' for granted. You were to suffer your fate. That was not necessarily to know it."[55] The kind and loving May hopes for Marcher now only that he will never know "it," since now it is too late. He guesses that it is her death which will be the prodigious event, because his is a mind alert only to melodrama (remember when he wished something drastic had marked their earliest meeting: "Then they would be in possession of something . . ."). The truth is that it was her life that was the great thing, and the love she brought to him. Never having properly appreciated or experienced this, to realize the truth only as she dies would be a pain the compassionate May does not wish him to know. The waste of it is his tragedy, and she wishes to spare him that:

> "Don't know--when you needn't," she mercifully urged. "you needn't--for we shouldn't."
> "Shouldn't?" If he could but know what she meant!
> "No--it's too much."[56]

The consequences of Marcher's "cultivated detachment" are revealed

in Chapter V, as Marcher is alienated from those who are mourning May's death. With no "producible claim . . . no connection that anyone appeared obliged to recognize,"[57] he is granted none of the rights of the bereaved husband, which is the identity he presumes to have a right to:

> He couldn't quite have said what he expected, but he had somehow not expected this approach to a double privation. Not only had her interest failed him, but he seemed to feel himself unattended--and for a reason he couldn't sound--by the distinction, the dignity, the propriety, if nothing else, of the man markedly bereaved. It was as if, in the view of society, he had not <u>been</u> markedly bereaved, as if there still failed some sign or proof of it, and as if, nonetheless, his character could never be affirmed, nor the deficiency ever made up.[58]

It is characteristic of Marcher that he begins to understand his failure only in terms of how <u>he</u> is now being slighted. What Marcher is being denied here is the acknowledgement and confirmation that he denied May all these years. But Marcher is still kept from full understanding by his preoccupation: "What could he have done, after all, in her lifetime, without giving them both, as it were, away? He couldn't have made it known she was watching him, for that would have published the superstition of the Beast."[59] Just as his egotistical self-absorption has kept him from experience, it also keeps him from knowledge.

As the final chapter opens, James subtly introduces one of the story's thematic paradoxes. Before, Marcher thought of May in terms of the person who allowed him to pass as an ordinary man. Now he thinks only of the "distinction" she gave him:

> He was simply now one of them himself--he was in the dust, without a peg for the sense of difference; and there were hours when, before the temples of gods and the sepulchers of kings, his spirit turned, for nobleness of association, to the barely discriminated slab in the London suburb.[60]

This is one of the moral mysteries James is exploring. To be a full participating member of the human community, to enter into the common experience of love and life, is to feel the distinction which is to be one of mankind. But this still eludes Marcher, as the next sentence makes clear: "That [slab] had become for him, and more intensely with time and distance, his one witness of a past glory."[61] He is not drawn to her grave because he loved her, for herself, but because she had been watching with him, and had apparently "witnessed" his fate. His fascination with, and need for being at, her grave is presented in terms of complaisance and nostalgia, as opposed to true grief. When James describes Marcher as "a contented landlord,"[62] he is reminding us that he never valued May for herself, but only for her connection and usefulness to him. He needs her because she knew him; and in that knowledge he feels his identity, his existence. That is almost right, except that it is all one-sided. She knew him, but as has been pointed out, he never knew her, he never acknowledged her.

When revelation finally comes to Marcher, it comes, significantly, from "the face of a fellow mortal."[63] The revelation comes as Marcher recognizes true grief and passion in another man's face--recognizes it and envies it:

> Now that illumination had begun, however, it blazed to the zenith, and what he presently stood there gazing at was the sounded void of his life. . . . The name on the table smote him as the passage of his neighbor had done, and what it said to him, full in the face, was that she was what he had missed.[64]

There seems to be some incongruity between this realization and his great conclusion that "he had been the man of his time, the man, to whom nothing on earth was to have happened."[65] This seeming paradox is

understood as one comes to a full understanding of what James means by "happen." She was what was to have happened to him; but she was ultimately nothing to him. Marcher's fate "happened" to him while he was waiting for it; but since he did not recognize it, it did not really happen. A happening cannot be a merely passive occurrence; it must be one that the person fully recognizes and takes part in. To happen means to come into being; and nothing comes into being until it is perceived, experienced and acknowledged. Marcher's existence may be said to be a moral failure because there is so little "felt life" in it.

Marcher forfeits his "allotted share of experience" through his egotism, his total preoccupation with his individual destiny. He thought he was saving himself for his great destiny, while in fact he was keeping himself from it. The moral mystery James is exploring is the seeming paradox of individual fulfillment achieved by communion with another. Had Marcher fully appreciated May, had he understood experience in a subtler, deeper sense, he would have lived, and something would have happened to him.

The concurrent point James makes with this fable is that life lived as mere anecdote is failure, failure to be anything. What makes life more than just an anecdote is awareness and the significance we bring to it "through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire." This is what Marcher denies in his denial of May Bartram.

May Bartram dies from not being allowed to come into existence. But it is Marcher whom we are meant to see has no life. If this is not made clear at May's funeral, when Marcher is so utterly ignored, when he is treated as if he never happened at all, we see it in the final scene where Marcher throws his desperate self upon May's tomb. In denying May,

he has denied the significance of his life. He is doomed now to emptiness:

> The escape would have been to love her; then <u>then</u> he would have lived. <u>She</u> had lived--who could say now with what passion?--since she have loved him <u>for</u> himself; whereas he had never thought of her (ah, how it hugely glared at him!) but in the chill of his egotism and the light of her use.[4]

May, whose name conveys the promise of spring, represents the potential and the source of life: the human relation. All we are even given is this possibility, and our fate is what we make of it. May was something that might have been, but Marcher never realized the potential. For Henry James, then, to live means to realize one's potential, one's possibilities. Realization depends on recognition, on <u>consciousness</u>. John Marcher's failure to live is failure of consciousness; and as such, it is a moral failure.

Notes

[1] Philip Rahv, ed., The Great Short Works of Henry James (New York: Dial Press, Inc., 1944), p. 751.

[2] Lauren T. Cowdery, The Nouvelle of Henry James in Theory and Practice (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), p. 21.

[3] Henry James, The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 181.

[4] Cowdery, p. 26.

[5] James, Critical Prefaces, p. 31.

[6] Sheldon Sacks, Fiction and the Shape of Belief (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1964), p. 26.

[7] Cowdery, p. 20.

[8] James, Critical Prefaces, p. 45.

[9] James, Critical Prefaces, pp. 31-32.

[10] Cowdery, p. 23.

[11] James, Critical Prefaces, p. 45.

[12] Henry James, "The Beast in the Jungle," in The Turn of the Screw and Other Short Novels (New York: New American Library, 1980), p. 411.

[13] Mary Doyle Springer, Forms of the Modern Novella (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 116.

[14] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 450.

[15] Both Daisy Miller and The Bench of Desolation deal with sensitive gentlemen who refuse involvements with vital and very human women. Daisy Miller is never accepted by Winterburn; she dies, and we are left with an image of Winterburn continuing in his cold, sterile, barren existence. Herbert Dodd forsakes Kate Cookham and has a miserable life, until he eventually accepts her--something which is neither easy nor painless, but which results in fulfillment.

[16] Henry James, "Bench of Desolation," in The Modern Novelette (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), pp. 154, 157, 164, 169.

[17] Cowdery, p. 54.

[18] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 411.

[19] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 408

[20] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 410.

[21] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 416.

[22] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 418.

[23] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 417.

[24] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 418.

[25] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 420.

[26] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 421.

[27] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 421.

[28] James, "Beast," Short Novels, pp. 421-22.

[29] James, "Beast," Short Novels, pp. 423-24.

[30] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 424.

[31] This is a characteristic of James's novellas which Cowdery identifies: "a character may return to a plaguing question or obsession. The effect created by the pattern of return is a kind of circular movement around the center of the subject" (p. 28). Judith Leibowitz has identified the same kind of reworking which she has referred to as "repetitive structure." The novella presents its central issue and then reworks it, concentrating on a central issue while developing the thematic implications (theme-complex).

[32] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 425.

[33] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 425.

[34] James, "Beast," Short Novels, pp. 425-26.

[35] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 427.

[36] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 427.

[37] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 427.

[38] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 428.

[39] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 428.

[40] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 428.

[41] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 429.

[42] James, "Beast," Short Novels, pp. 429-30.

[43] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 432.

[44] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 433.

[45] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 434.

[46] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 434.

[47] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 434.

[48] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 434.

[49] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 435.

[50] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 436.

[51] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 436.

[52] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 437.

[53] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 439.

[54] James, Critical Prefaces, pp. 31-32.

[55] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 441.

[56] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 441.

[57] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 442.

[58] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 442.

[59] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 443.

[60] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 445.

[61] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 445.

[62] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 446.

[63] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 447.

[64] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 449.

[65] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 450.

[66] James, "Beast," Short Novels, p. 450.

CHAPTER TWO

The Virgin and the Gipsy

> . . . every man has a mob-self and an individual self, in varying proportions. Some men are almost all mob-self, incapable of imaginative individual responses. . . . The public, which is feeble-minded like an idiot, will never be able to preserve its individual reactions from the tricks of the exploiter. The public is always exploited and always will be exploited. . . . With imaginative words and individual meanings it is tricked into giving the great goose-cackle of mob-acquiescence. Vox populi, vox Dei. It has always been so, and will always be so. Why? Because the public has not enough wit to distinguish between mob-meanings and individual meanings. The mass is forever vulgar, because it can't distinguish between its own original feelings and feelings which are diddled into existence by the exploiter. The public is always profane, because it is controlled from the outside, by the trickster, and never from the inside, by its own sincerity. The mob is always obscene, because it is always second-hand.[1]

For D.H. Lawrence, moral thought and creativity depend on imagination and individual reactions, since "second-hand" convictions are no convictions at all. In order to "preserve its individual reactions," the individual self must be able to stand alone. Moral survival, then, depends on the survival of the individual self, or as Lawrence puts it: "We must be able to be alone, otherwise we are just victims."[2]

John Marcher thought he had to be alone to meet his fate; but despite his "cultivated detachment," he was not "able to be alone," as we see in his desperation after May Bartram dies. Marcher confused individuality with egocentricity. To be alone means, in this context, to be an individual; but Lawrence's concept of "singleness" does not deny

the necessity of human interaction, or the need to recognize "otherness." On the contrary, he goes on to say: "But when we are able to be alone, then we realize that the only thing to do is to start a new relationship with another--or even the same--human being."[3] And elsewhere he states, "No human being can develop save through the polarized connection with other beings."[4] Human interaction is, then, also essential to development. So the focus of most of Lawrence's work is on individual life, but it is the individual life in delicate balance with "its essential and inescapable relations with others."[5]

The Virgin and the Gipsy may be recognized as a moral fable because "in it the intention is peculiarly insistent, so that the representative significance of everything in the fable--character, episode, and so on--is immediately apparent as we read."[6] In his discussion of this novella, Leavis has called it a "complex work of definition that has been done by creative means,"[7] whose theme "has nothing to do with Wraggle-taggle-gipsyism. . . . The tale is concerned with defining and presenting desire as something pre-eminently real--'real,' here, having its force in relation to the nullity of life at the rectory."[8]

G.W. Watson agrees with Leavis that the work is about "desire," but he argues that:

> Leavis is highly misleading when he speaks of Lawrence's art 'vindicating desire'. . . . What Lawrence does in The Virgin and the Gipsy is demonstrate the highly mimetic nature of desire: he penetrates behind a smokescreen of "glamour" to reveal the "fearful selfishness" it obscures. It is always selfishness at the expense of someone and it is fearful because that someone is turned into a victim.[9]

Although "desire" is an important element in the work, I believe that if the work "vindicates" anything, it is the "selfishness" which Watson

refers to, but which Lawrence would probably call individuality. And as it defends individuality, this complex work defines, or redefines, morality.

This is the "peculiarly insistent intention" of Lawrence's novella, The Virgin and the Gipsy, to defend the integrity of the individual, to define a "finer morality," and to rescue the individual from the mass. The central character of this fable, "the virgin" Yvette, must be saved from the nullifying effects of conventional morality. Since, for Lawrence, "the essential function of art is moral,"[10] it is the function of the artist to expose the false morality of society, to reveal the hypocrisy, and destructiveness of "mob-meanings," to substitute a "finer morality for a grosser."[11] And by exposing the obscenity, dishonesty, and immorality of the mob, Lawrence hopes to rescue the individual self in each of us, to keep us from "giving the great goose-cackle of mob-acquiescence."

***

> When the vicar's wife went off with a young and penniless man the scandal knew no bounds. Her two little girls were only seven and nine years old respectively. And the vicar was such a good husband. True, his hair was grey. But his moustache was dark, he was handsome, and still full of furtive passion for his unrestrained and beautiful wife.
>
> Why did she go?'[12]

In the scandal we hear the "great goose-cackle of mob-acquiescence." The mob's reaction, condemning her and labeling her "a bad woman," reflects the superficial and limited "way of knowing" of the mob: she left her husband because he was aging. The mob, restricted to empirical knowledge, can see only the physical phenomenon of his greying hair. And likewise, the mob defends the vicar on the superficial grounds

of good looks. But Lawrence suggests there is an another answer, an answer known by the "good women," an answer which Lawrence wants the reader to come to know. And this knowledge is "that there is something wrong with the vicar, something that justifies his wife's having left him."[13] This something wrong is suggested in the word "furtive."

The mob fails to see that a man "full of furtive passion" might not have been "such a good husband" after all. The unwholesome and dishonest nature of the vicar's passion suggests that sex to the vicar was "a dirty little secret,"[14] making their relationship pornographic and degrading, a "breach of integrity"[15] to the individual (his wife). If the institution of marriage has degenerated into pornographic and hypocritical relations, then the proper response is to "burst away with . . . an eclat of revulsion."[16] To escape this relationship was, then, a brilliant success for the young woman, as the current usage of the word "eclat" suggests. In its archaic sense, "eclat" denoted scandal. Lawrence asks the reader to redefine, to leave behind outdated values, like words, whose meanings are not relevant to the individual.

Cynthia, or "the vicar's wife," is the first character to be mentioned in the tale, and the representative significance of her character will dominate the fable. If Cynthia is to represent individuality, and the rector the institutions of society (church, marriage, family), then the conflict of the novel may be defined as that between the individual and the institutions. And Lawrence's intention is clearly to <u>defend</u> Cynthia, or the individual.

His first step in this process is to reveal what happens when Cynthia, or individuality is driven out of the institutions:

> The vicarage family received decided modification, upon transference into the rectory. The vicar, now the rector, fetched up his old mother and his sister, and a brother from the city. The two little girls had a very different milieu from the old home.''

The family is now dominated by a manipulative, selfish and power-hungry old woman, who keeps herself in "the chief arm-chair" by invoking the "whole tradition of loyalty." The duplicity of this tradition, or myth, as Watson aptly puts it, is revealed in the old woman's aims and tactics. Her only concern is that she "was not going to be dethroned,"[1] which means not allowing any potential rivals. As far as the ex-wife or any future wife is concerned, this means exploiting and supporting the myth of loyalty her son has adopted: unable to keep the woman herself, he devotes himself to an ideal, "the pure white snowflower"--thus dehumanizing Cynthia and distancing himself from her.

As a representative of the mob morality, the Mater uses the label (a kind of "formulable statement") to turn the woman into an object, simultaneously distancing her son from his wife and focussing his loyalty on an unattainable ideal. This duplicity allows the Mater to play the role of the kindly old granny in her "old-fashioned lace cap" and "black silk," forgiving the errant wife, yet loyal to her son. But she is exploiting her son's weaknesses and manipulating him to her own selfish ends. And the vicar, having far more mob-self than individual self, cannot "distinguish between [his] own original feelings and feelings which are diddled into existence by the exploiter." The Mater's myth of loyalty is dishonest and selfish, but powerful. With her own offspring under control, the only threat to her rule comes from her grandaughter Yvette, "who had some of the vague, careless blitheness of She-who-was-Cynthia."[1]

The mass is always threatened by the individual. In fact, danger is an inherent part of individuality, as it is of morality, the morality which this work defines:

> Mingled with all this, was the children's perfectly distinct recollection of their real home, the Vicarage in the south, and their glamorous but not very dependable mother, Cynthia. She had made a great glow, a flow of life, like a swift and dangerous sun in the home, forever coming and going. They always associated her presence with brightness, but also with danger; with glamour, but with fearful selfishness.[20]

But without individuality, as without Cynthia, there is another sort of danger:

> Now the glamour was gone, and the white snowflower, like a porcelain wreath, froze on its grave. The danger of instability, the peculiarly dangerous sort of selfishness, like lions and tigers, was also gone. There was now a complete stability, in which one could perish safely.[21]

Cynthia represents spontaneity, creativity, and individuality. When these qualities are gone from the marriage, the family, or any of society's institutions, stagnation sets it; when individuality is driven away, the mass (personified by Granny's "old bulk") moves in; the "grosser morality" of the mob takes over, and Society, as represented by Granny's offspring, is a mass of weak and disintegrated members.

The second chapter of this story defines "stability" and the oppressive and consuming demands of Granny's (the mob's) "tradition of loyalty":

> The rectory struck a chill into their hearts as they entered. It seemed ugly, and almost sordid, with the dank air of that middle-class degenerated comfort which has ceased to be comfortable and has turned stuffy, unclean. The hard, stone house struck the girls as being unclean, they could not have said why. The shabby furniture seemed somehow sordid, nothing was fresh. Even the food at meals had that awful dreary

> sordidness which is so repulsive to a young thing coming from abroad. Roast beef and wet cabbage, cold mutton and mashed potatoes, sour pickles, inexcusable puddings.[12]

Domination has replaced direction in a family and society which anchors instead of steers, and the shackle of the family bond is felt in the prison-like institution of their home. The rectory is, therefore, a perfect metaphor for the degenerated condition of middle-class morality. It is dominated by a corrupt will, whose means of ruling is manipulation and censorship of anything external to it.

Granny, in her "old bulk," is the mass, or mob, itself. She is the embodiment of the corrupt will which defines the mob, spokesperson and perpetrator of its false morality. And, as "the mob is always obscene," Lawrence's physical descriptions of Granny, spread throughout the second chapter between the incidents which define her character, intensify in their repulsiveness. We are told first of all that "Granny, who 'loved a bit of pork,' . . . quickly slobbered her portion--lucky if she spilled nothing on her protuberant stomach."[13] And then,

> But the Mater rose as ever, towards noon, and at the mid-day meal, she presided from her arm-chair, with her stomach protruding, her reddish, pendulous face, that had a sort of horrible majesty, dropping soft under the wall of her high brow, and her blue eyes peering unseeing. Her white hair was getting scanty, it was altogether a little indecent. . . . She was perfectly complacent, sitting in her ancient obesity, and after meals, getting the wind from her stomach, pressing her bosom with her hand as she "rifted" in gross physical complacency.[14]

And as the chapter closes:

> And it was then that Yvette, looking round, suddenly saw the stony, implacable will-to-power in the old and motherly-seeming Granny. She sat there bulging backwards in her chair, impassive, her reddish, pendulous face rather mottled, almost unconscious, but implacable, her face like a mask that hid something stony, relentless. It was the <u>static inertia</u> of her

> unsavoury power. Yet in a minute she would open her ancient mouth to find out every detail about Leo Wetherell. For the moment she was hibernating in her oldness, her agedness. But in a minute her mouth would open, her mind would flicker awake, and with her insatiable greed for life, other people's life, she would start on her quest for every detail. She was like the old toad which Yvette had watched, fascinated, as it sat on the ledge of the beehive, immediately in front of the little entrance by which the bees emerged, and which, with a demonish lightning-snap of its pursed jaws, caught every bee as it came out to launch into the air, swallowed them one after the other, as if it could consume the whole-hive full, into its aged, bulging, purse-like wrinkledness.[25] [underlining mine]

Granny is identified with the mob in terms of general vulgarity, but more specifically, Lawrence focusses on her all-consuming, unnatural appetite, a predominant characteristic of the mob. Her "insatiable greed for life, other people's life," takes on such proportions as to virtually extinguish her humanity. Hence, the toad metaphor. But at the same time, it is the kind of distancing device Springer identifies in "apologues" or moral fables. The representative significance of the character is stressed so that the reader will be distanced from the fate of the character as a human being and will focus on the significance or meaning of the character and story.

The life which Granny has swallowed up is personified in her daughter, Aunt Cissie. A victim of Granny's appetite, Cissie has none of her own. She in fact "hated food herself, hated the fact of eating."[26] By sleeping with Granny, Cissie has sacrificed her own sleep, that precious and essential retreat into the sanctity of one's own unconscious ("that essential and unique nature of every individual creature"[27]). Cut off from her own essential and unique nature, which constitutes a kind of "breach of integrity," she loses her appetite and her health: "And she grew greyer and greyer, and the food in the house got worse, and Aunt Cissie had to have an operation."[28] As Lawrence

tells us elsewhere, "It's the failure to live that makes one ill."[29]

The representative significance of episodes is important in the way Lawrence develops a pattern of comparison and contrast. Yvette's two main characteristics in the tale, her vagueness and her yearning, are consistently contrasted with Granny's determined will and appetite. The kind of natural and healthy appetite which is essential to life is seen in Yvette at the opening of Chapter Two. Her reluctance to go back to the "boring" rectory is the natural reaction of a "young thing" yearning for life. When Yvette exclaims, "I should like to fall violently in love,"[30] it is the spontaneous expression of this yearning to partake in the adventure of life. But whether or not Yvette will be able (unlike Cissie) to resist the will of the mass and preserve this essential appetite is a matter of her will, that is, choice. This is an important point which Lawrence makes clear in the exchange between Cissie and Yvette over the tea-cakes:

> Yvette absently grabbed another cake, from the now almost empty plate. Aunt Cissie, who was driven almost crazy by Yvette's vague and inconsiderate ways, felt the green rage fuse in her heart. She picked up her own plate, on which was the one cake she allowed herself, and said with vitriolic politeness, offering it to Yvette.
>
> "Won't you have mine?"
>
> "Oh thanks!" said Yvette, starting in her angry vagueness. And with an appearance of the same insouciance, she helped herself to Aunt Cissie's cake also, adding as an afterthought: "If you're sure you don't want it."[31]

If you are willing to make a sacrifice out of yourself, don't be surprised if someone takes you up on it. Lawrence has no mercy for those who victimize themselves. It will be Yvette's choice then, if she sacrifices her own natural appetite to the perverse and corrupted appetite of the mass.

But free choice is not so easily made. The difficulty Yvette has opposing Granny is revealed in the incident of the open window. Yvette is no match for her because the "tradition of loyalty" demands respect for elders. Her own instinctive and individual reactions to Granny are suppressed by a sense of guilt inflicted on her by the mob, as expressed by Yvette's friends who drop by the following afternoon:

> Granny was always there, like some awful idol of old flesh, consuming all the attention. There was only the one room for everybody. And there sat the old lady, with Aunt Cissie keeping an acrid guard over her. Everybody must be presented first to Granny: she was ready to be genial, she liked company. She had to know who everybody was, where they came from, every circumstance of their lives. And then, when she was au fait, she could get hold of the conversation.
>
> Nothing could be more exasperating to the girls. "Isn't old Mrs. Saywell wonderful! She takes such an interest in life, at nearly ninety!"
>
> "She does take an interest in people's affairs, if that's life," said Yvette.
>
> Then she would immediately feel guilty. After all, it was wonderful to be nearly ninety, and have such a clear mind! And Granny never actually did anybody any harm. It was more that she was in the way. And perhaps it was rather awful to hate somebody because they were old and in the way.
>
> Yvette immediately repented, and was nice. Granny blossomed forth into reminiscences of when she was a girl, in the little town in Buckinghamshire. She talked and talked away, and was so entertaining. She really was rather wonderful.[32]

Yvette abandons her own feelings and ends up giving "the great goose-cackle of mob acquiescence."

"Actually" is a key word in this fable. Yvette is afraid to trust her "intuitive" knowledge, "the things . . . we never can directly know. . . ." Yvette's difficulty in recognizing the harm Granny does is in her not trusting her own intuitive knowledge, her own perceptions. Her individual-self lacks the confidence to defy her mob-self, the side which relies on the "actual." Remember she is the offspring of both Cynthia and the Rector. Her understanding of Granny's evil, insidious

ways remains locked in her unconscious, the core of her individual-self, where it finds expression in the symbol of the toad. (Symbols are the language of the unconscious.) Whether or not Yvette will survive will be a matter of her individual-self triumphing over her mob-self.

As Chapter Two offers two contrasting kinds of appetite--the natural, spontaneous appetite of Yvette, and the overdeveloped, gluttonous appetite of Granny--Chapter Three explores two kinds of rebellion:

> Six young rebels [Yvette and her friends], they sat very perkily in the car as they swished through the mud. Yet they had a peaked look too. After all, they had nothing really to rebel against, any of them. They were left so very free in their movements. Their parents let them do almost entirely as they liked. There wasn't really a fetter to break, nor a prison-bar to file through, nor a bolt to shatter. The keys to their lives were in their own hands. And there they dangled inert.
>
> It is very much easier to shatter prison bars than to open undiscovered doors to life. As the younger generation finds out, somewhat to its chagrin. True, there was Granny. But poor old Granny, you couldn't actually say to her: "Lie down and die, you old woman!" She might be an old nuisance, but she never really did anything. It wasn't fair to hate her.[33]

Lawrence's irony, since he obviously believes they do have something to rebel against, is directed at their ignorance, their inability to recognize what "actual harm" is and to act against it. "She (Granny) never really did anything" echoes the voice of Yvette's conscience from the previous chapter: "And Granny never actually did anybody any harm." Lawrence is calling attention to the fact that Yvette and her friends are limited in their perceptions to the realm of physical phenomena, in much the same way that John Marcher was. So without this understanding, they don't see what they have to rebel against; and their "rebellion" is all for show. It is, in fact, no rebellion at all, but conformity to a certain social convention, "a really jolly social life,"[34] and a form of

"static inertia."

Then they, and we, encounter the gipsies. As Leavis points out, "One can say that, for Yvette, the gipsy represents the antithesis of the rectory, with its base self-love, its fear of life, its stagnation, and its nullity."[35] The gipsy's colorful, clean attractiveness and virility contrast with Granny's dark decrepitude, as his snug winter camp with its "smell of rich food" contrasts with the rectory. But the gipsy represents more than another way of living; he represents another way of knowing; he represents the intuitive. His first word is to invite them to have their fortunes told by the gipsy woman. The "six young rebels" take it as a lark, except for Yvette, who is immediately struck by the kind of strength which she finds in his "dark conceited proud eyes": "It was a peculiar look, in the eyes that belonged to the tribe of the humble: the pride of the pariah, the half-sneering challenge of the outcast, who sneered at law-abiding men, and went his own way."[36] Yvette is separated from her group by her awareness of the gipsy. Amidst the sporting of the others, there is a private scene being played out between Yvette and the Gipsy, who is also very much aware of her: "She met his dark eyes for a second, their level search, their insolence, their complete indifference to people like Bob and Leo, and something took fire in her breast. She thought: 'He is stronger than I am! He doesn't care!'"[37]

Yvette sees the gipsy, all of the gipsies, as an alternative to her life, a rebellion against her life. For her, the gipsy has almost mythical status; he becomes her ideal. And, as Watson has pointed out, it is not just the gipsy man, but his wife as well. They have become a replacement myth for the rectory.

Therefore, when Watson says that Yvette and the Gipsy are both attracted to "what the other represents," I agree to a certain extent. "Yvette is attracted to the gipsy and his woman because they symbolize in her mind the 'scandal'--in the shape of her mother having run off 'with a young and penniless man'--against which the world of the rectory defines itself."[38] But there is more to the attraction than this. I think they do indeed recognize a certain affinity in one another; they intuitively recognize in each other a kind of understanding, an understanding which separates them from their conventional surroundings. As a gipsy, he is on the outside of society; as a virgin, Yvette is also in a sense on the outside, uninitiated. Yvette's virginity has more to do with the state of her consciousness than her sexuality. Yvette's vagueness is essentially the same thing as her virginity: she is uninitiated into the corrupt consciousness of her society.

So Yvette recognizes something of herself in the gipsy, that something which isolates her "individual-self" from her "mob-self." But she sees that his "individual-self" is stronger than hers. As is frequently the case in this kind of hero-worship, or idealization, Yvette fails to see <u>his</u> weakness, a weakness which I believe Lawrence very much intended the reader to see. Watson calls attention to this weakness in the gipsy's "dishonest stare," his insolence, his swagger, which suggest that he "cares" a great deal more than Yvette realizes. But rather than making him one of the "slaves" of conventional morality as well, this weakness reveals the fragility of the gipsy's rebellion. His heroic proportions may exist in Yvette's mind, but Lawrence warns us through language not to label him.

The gipsy <u>does</u> feel the threat and menace of the mob, as

represented by the hostile approach of Leo in his motor car (blasting his horn and threatening to run over the gipsy's cart). Every individual feels the threat of the mob, and indifference is frequently a means of defense. He recognizes himself the fragility of his position. Despite its hidden snugness, his camp can never be totally defended, unassailable, permanently fixed and secure. There is, even, a certain futility about the gipsy's rebellion, as Lawrence suggests later in the tale, when he tells us that Yvette "liked that mysterious endurance in him, which endures in opposition, without any idea of victory."[39] This defines a kind of spiritual superiority, a kind of surrender of the self-willed ego, for which the "idea of victory" is always paramount and always enslaving. If the individual self is always threatened by the mob-self within. as well as the mob without, it is strengthened and reinforced by those "essential relations" with other individuals. It is for this reason that the gipsy is attracted to Yvette, and, in fact, needs her, needs communion with her.

Meanwhile, Yvette, who is feeling the stirrings of her individual-self, has lapsed into a spell-like, otherworldly, trance. But when it comes her turn to have her fortune told, she is suddenly frightened, apprehensive. Part of her believes in the mystery, the wonder, of the old gipsy's knowledge; and that knowledge frightens her. Yet she ultimately enters the gipsy's caravan to have her fortune told in private. Yvette comes out of the caravan some time later, we are told, with a "stooping, witch-like silence about her as she emerged in the twilight."[40] But, significantly, she instantly loses this enchantment when she rejoins her companions (or re-enters the mob). Despite her fascination for and affinity with the gipsies, her mob-self still has control. Alligned with her companions once more, she feels the need to

refute the spiritual knowledge of the gipsy, and to attack their pride with her middle-class condescension.

The struggle to free oneself from the mob is not an easy one, the triumph never secure. But to live within the strictures of the mob is to subject oneself to a steady degradation. This becomes more and more apparent as Lawrence reveals the dishonesty and corruption of the "grosser morality" of the mob.

The window-fund episode is another illustration of the way in which Lawrence uses a contrast to define the "grosser morality" of the mob (the rectory family) and the "finer morality" of the individual (Cynthia). ("In the negative, of course, the positive is invoked."[41]) There is no defense or justification for Yvette's trifling away money which does not belong to her; and it is not Lawrence's intention to offer any. As a fable, we must grant the episode its symbolic significance, which means to look beyond the surface of the "actual." And when we do that, we see that it is not really the taking of the money for which Yvette is being punished.

What throws the rector into such a frenzy is not the money itself, but Yvette's attitude, her vague, thoughtless disregard for things. When he first hears she has misused the money, he is merely "rather severe":

> "If you needed money, why didn't you tell me?" he asked coldly. "Have you ever been refused anything in reason?"
> "I--I thought it didn't matter," stammered Yvette.
> "And what have you done with the money?"
> "I suppose I've spent it," said Yvette, with wide, distraught eyes and a peaked face.
> "Spent it, on what?"
> "I can't remember everything: stockings and things, and I gave some of it away."[42]

Then the rector becomes really angry, his face contorting into "a

snarling, doggish look, a sort of sneer,"[43] as he recognizes "some of that vague, careless blitheness of She-who-was-Cynthia" in his daughter. So she is being punished not so much for what she has done, but for what she is; and it is this which I think Lawrence intended us to recognize as the rector's lack of "belief" in her.

For Aunt Cissie as well, the window fund incident is representative of a crime which drives her practically insane: "The selfishness! The selfishness! The selfishness!"[44] It is not the money, which the rector restores to Cissie, which enrages her; it is Yvette's failure to conform to the rules of behavior to which Cissie has sacrificed her life. Aunt Cissie's "green tumour of hate" is more than a little jealousy. She envies the young girl her freedom, her "selfishness"; and the suppressed envy erupts in resentment and hate.

Aunt Cissie's and the Rector's reactions, then, are based on hate and fear: feelings the mob always has for the individual; and their effect on Yvette is to produce a sense of shame and self-loathing, as is always the effect of the mob on the individual:

> Yvette remained crushed, and deflowered and humiliated. She crept about, trailing the rays of her pride. She had a revulsion even from herself. Oh, why had she ever touched the leprous money! Her whole flesh shrank as if it were defiled. Why was that? Why, why was that?"[45]

Lawrence's language here suggests a violation so brutal and physical that we immediately think of rape, and in this way Lawrence shifts the emphasis from Yvette's "crime" to the crime of her "punishment" and forces us to question which is more immoral. As crimes are frequently judged by their motivation, Yvette's "thoughtlessness" must appear the lesser crime when compared to Cissie's hate and the Rector's enraged

fear. But if this is not clear enough, Lawrence offers another contrasting incident which further undercuts the credibility of the rectory morality.

The second episode of this chapter reveals the hypocrisy of Granny's "tradition of loyalty" and contrasts Granny's willful malice with Yvette's thoughtless crime. Granny takes advantage of a minor family squabble to slander the girls' Mother: "At least . . . we don't come from half-depraved stock."[46] The remark not only reveals a viciousness in the old lady's character, but her malicious intention, which is to wound. And her duplicitous editorializing of the exchange later on reveals her also to be a liar and her tradition of family loyalty to be a lie. Again, the crimes must be compared: Yvette stole money; her family robs her of her human dignity. The comparison is part of the interpretation process of reading fables.

It is not surprising that Yvette turns for comfort and solace to the memory of her Mother:

> When things went very wrong, they thought of their mother, and despised their father and all the low brood of the Saywells. Their mother, of course, had belonged to a higher, if more dangerous and "immoral" world. More selfish, decidedly. But with a showier gesture. More unscrupulous and more easily moved to contempt: but not so humiliating.[47]

It is the will to humiliate, to degrade, which is the greatest crime, and which is the motivation for rape. The only way not to be humiliated is not to care, and Yvette is trying not to care in the same way that her Mother had not cared, in the way that the gipsy seemed not to care. So the gipsy offers solace to Yvette in two ways: the healing power of his pure desire after the humiliating violation by her family, and a withdrawal to a higher, superior reality. Her identification with her

Mother shifts towards the gipsies, who are after all, much more accessible and immediate. And she longs to run away to their freedom and purity.

The pattern of comparison and contrast continues into the next chapter in which Yvette receives two proposals. When the gipsy comes to the rectory (as if in some mystic response to her longing), he and Yvette engage in a subtle flirtation, which is all suggestions, double meanings and insinuation, culminating in his provacative invitation to "come Fridays, when I'm there."[48]

But Yvette resists him, or rather his power or appeal; she reacts against the "feeling" that possesses her after the gipsy is gone, "the feeling that she had been looked upon, not from the outside, but from the inside, from her secret female self."[49] As Watson has pointed out, the show she puts on with her sister Lucille when they dress up in their best "gewgaws" and "sailed down and into the sitting room"[50] is a reaction against the gipsy's penetrating gaze which has left her feeling naked, vulnerable. Interestingly, it is this show which smoothes over the family feud and restores the family to its status quo, allows the family to resume its show of unison and congeniality:

> The rector laughed aloud, and Uncle Fred said:
> "The family feels itself highly honoured."
> Both the elderly men were quite gallant, which was what Yvette wanted.
> "Come and let me feel your dresses, do!" said Granny. "Are they your best? It is a shame I can't see them."
> "Tonight, Mater," said Uncle Fred, "we shall have to take the young ladies in to dinner, and live up to the honour. Will you go with Cissie?"
> "I certainly will," said Granny. "Youth and beauty must come first."[51]

They are once again the "Saywells," but the hypocrisy of which the name

is suggestive has been fully revealed in the preceding episodes.

And Yvette remains troubled by the superficiality of it, plagued by the question "Why is nothing important?" And, as she pursues her "really jolly social life," she is bored and irritated by her friends, particularly Leo, who issues her a very different sort of proposition: "Why don't you and me get engaged, Yvette?"[53] There is no "naked insinuation of desire here"--no desire at all--and no awareness of her either. Leo's proposal of marriage is vulgar, and Yvette is shocked and repelled by it: "She might as well have expected old Rover the Newfoundland dog to propose to her."[53] As she compares Leo to a dog, Yvette is mimicking the gipsy woman's "contempt, for such domesticated dogs, calling themselves men."[54] Leo's coarse style is worth comparing to the gipsy's:

> "Why?" she said. "Why should you mind if I was an old maid?"
>
> "Every reason in the world," he said, looking up at her with a bold, meaningful smile, that wanted to make its meaning blatant, if not patent.
>
> But instead of penetrating into some deep secret place, and shooting her there, Leo's bold and patent smile only hit her on the outside of the body, like a tennis ball, and caused the same kind of sudden irritated reaction.[55]

It is his obviousness which is so offensive, a blatancy which has all the leering lewdness of the mob, and which is abrasive to her sensibilities. It is not surprising that the next time the "usual bunch" comes around, "Yvette disagreeably and unaccountably refuses to go."[56] She heads off for the gipsy's camp, where this time she does surrender to the "dark complete power" of the gipsy. She is absorbed by his awareness of her, an awareness which affirms her humanity as well as her sexuality, in opposition to the rectory family and Leo, who degrade her sexuality and deny her humanity.

Despite her attempt to remain casual and nonchalant, Yvette slips into a mystical, trance-like state:

> And again the bird of her heart sank down and seemed to die. Vaguely, as in a dream, she received from him the cup of coffee. She was aware only of his silent figure, sitting like a shadow there on the log, with an enamel cup in his hand, drinking his coffee in silence. Her will had departed from her limbs, he had power over her: his shadow was on her.
>
> And he, as he blew his hot coffee, was aware of one thing only, the mysterious fruit of her virginity, her perfect tenderness in the body.
>
> At length he put down his coffee-cup by the fire, then looked round at her. Her hair fell across her face, as she tried to sip from the hot cup. On her face was that tender look of sleep, which a nodding flower has when it is full out, like a mysterious early flower, she was full out, like a snowdrop which spreads its three white wings in a flight into the waking sleep of its brief blossoming. The waking sleep of her full-opened virginity, entranced like a snowdrop in the sunshine, was upon her.
>
> The gipsy, supremely aware of her, waited for her like the substance of shadow, as shadow waits and is there.
>
> At length his voice said, without breaking the spell:
>
> "You want to go in my caravan, now, and wash your hands?"
>
> The childlike, sleep-waking eyes of her moment of perfect virginity looked into his, unseeing. She was only aware of the dark, strange effluence of him bathing her limbs, washing her at last purely will-less. She was aware of <u>him</u>, as a dark, complete power.
>
> "I think I might," she said.[57]

The seductive rhythm of the prose here and the suggestive progression of this scene enhance the mystical, other-worldliness of their relationship. And the silent dialogue between them is carried out on another, intuitive, level of understanding. The power the gipsy has over her is his awareness of her, his penetrating awareness which enters "into some deep, secret place, and shoot[s] her there."[58] This awareness then, with its very sexual connotations connects the physical with the spiritual. And the state of unconsciousness into which he is luring her is an acceptance of a kind of mystical mysteriousness which the gipsy's caravan may be said to represent.

But before she is allowed to enter the caravan, the spell is broken by the noisy arrival of "the little Jewess" in her motor car. Yvette's subsequent transformation and transferral of interest from the gipsy to Mrs. Fawcett is illustrative of the difficulty the individual has in penetrating the mysterious sources of knowledge. As Yvette transfers her attention to Mrs. Fawcett, she in essence turns on the gipsy, and we see her reassuming the "lordly ways" with which she previously condescended to the gipsy woman. And he acutely senses her withdrawal and his loss:

> "You're going back in the motor-car [with Mrs.Fawcett]?" he asked.
> "Yes!" she replied, with a rather mincing mannerism. "The weather is so treacherous!"
> "Treacherous weather!" he repeated, looking at the sky.
> She could not tell in the least what his feelings were. In truth, she wasn't very much interested. She was rather fascinated, now, by the little Jewess, mother of two children, who was taking her wealth away from the well-known engineer and transferring it to the penniless, sporting young Major Eastwood, who must be five or six years younger than she. Rather intriguing!"

As Yvette earlier mimicked the gipsy woman in her contempt for the "Rover" boys, Yvette is now prepared to mimic Mrs. Fawcett, as we see at the close of this chapter: "She flung her scarf royally over her shoulder, and followed the fur coat of the Jewess, which seemed to walk on little legs of its own."[6] Yvette's mimicry of Mrs. Fawcett is a digression from her rebellion; but mimicry is the pitfall into which rebellion frequently falls.

Chapter Seven shows Yvette distancing herself from the Rectory family, even her sister Lucille, a secretary in the city and already too much a part of the mob. She is also trying to distance herself from the gipsy, whose memory haunts her like a conscience:

> Yvette pondered. Far in the background was the image of the gipsy as he had looked round at her, when she had said: The weather is so treacherous. She felt rather like Peter when the cock crew, as she denied him. Or rather, she did not deny the gipsy; she didn't care about his part in the show, anyhow. It was some hidden part of herself which she denied: that part which mysteriously and unconfessedly responded to him. And it was a strange, lustrous black cock which crew in mockery of her.[61]

It is not the gipsy himself, but what he represents which is important to Yvette and to this story. What happens between them is secondary to what happens between Yvette and "that hidden part of herself"[62] which she is denying. But if the gipsy represents "that hidden part of herself," what do "the Eastwoods," with whom she "was rather thrilled," represent?

Mrs. Fawcett proves to be not only a distraction for Yvette, but also a kind of test for the reader. Like Elizabeth Bennet with her Mr. Wickham, we may at first be taken in by Mrs. Fawcett's "honesty" and straightforwardness, her willingness to put "her cards . . . on the table."[63] But we ought to be as wary of her indiscretion as Elizabeth ought to have been of Wickham's. Mrs. Fawcett's "expensive get up" and ostentatious behavior are pure show, as is her moral indignation. The humorous image of the "little Jewess" (or rather, her fur coat), as she exits the gipsy camp, warns us of her true nature. The coat "seemed to walk on little legs of its own." She is all "show," with nothing within.

Watson calls attention to Lawrence's ironical treatment of Mrs. Fawcett, but is uncertain as to what effect Lawrence had in mind with this irony. I think there is sufficient evidence that Lawrence's irony is intended to reveal Mrs. Fawcett for a phony, while simultaneously showing why Yvette is taken in by her. When Lawrence tells us, "She was intensely moral, so moral, that she was a divorcee,"[64] the inference

from Yvette's point of view is that like her own Mother, the little Jewess has fled an intolerable and "immoral" marriage. But the true nature of Mrs. Fawcett's rebellion is revealed in her "rococco little cottage":

> It was a funny household. The cottage was hired furnished; but the little Jewess had brought along her dearest pieces of furniture. She had an odd little taste for the rococco, strange curving cupboards inlaid with mother of pearl, tortoiseshell, ebony, heaven knows what; strange tall flamboyant chairs, from Italy, with sea-green brocade: astonishing saints with wind-blown, richly coloured carven garments and pink faces: shelves of weird old Saxe and Capo di Monte figurines: and finally, a strange assortment of astonishing pictures painted on the back of glass, done, probably in the early years of the nineteenth century, or in the late eighteenth.[15]

Her tastes here represent her elaborate showiness, her affectation, and her unconventional conventionality. For despite these exotic furnishings, her household is strikingly conventional.

The Major's role in their affected unconventionality is also worth noting. Having resigned his commission and abandoned his career, the Major seems to have rejected the traditional role of the male in society as breadwinner and head of family. But there is something not quite right about the Major's "rebellion." As Watson has pointed out, "the marriage of the Eastwoods may not be so moral either, that is, honest. The only feeling the Major exhibits towards Mrs. Fawcett is a "tenderness . . . based on his sense of outraged justice."[16] There is a strong implication that the Major's deepest interest in the little Jewess is self-serving, mercenary:

> "But what about your future?" she asked him.
> "What about it?" he said, taking his pipe from his mouth, the unemotional point of a smile in his bird's eyes.
> "A career! Doesn't every man have to carve out a career?--like some huge goose with gravy?" She gazed with odd naivete

into his eyes.
"I'm perfectly all right today, and I shall be all right tomorrow," he said, with a cold, decided look. "Why shouldn't my future be continuous todays and tomorrows?"
He looked at her with unmoved searching.
"Quite!" she said. "I hate jobs, and all that side of life." But she was thinking of the Jewess's money.
To which he did not answer. His anger was of the soft, snowy sort, which comfortably muffles the soul.[7]

Behind his enigmatic pipe there is a strong suggestion of complacency--the pipe itself suggests complacency--which is reminiscent of the Mater's. Complacency is a characteristic of the mob, a kind of spiritual resignation from the issues of life, a muffling of the soul. And a further suggestion of duplicity in the Major is revealed in his attraction to Yvette, with whom he seems to be falling in love.

Despite her "curious indignation" against the "false morality," "Mrs. Eastwood" still adheres to it, as is illustrated by her "curious indignation" against the gipsy's interest in Yvette:

"But how did he look at you?" insisted the Jewess.
"Why--as if he really, but really desired me," said Yvette, her meditative face looking like the bud of a flower.
"What a vile fellow! What right had he to look at you like that?" cried the indignant Jewess.
"A cat may look at a king," calmly interposed the Major, and now his face had the smiles of a cat's face.
"You think he oughtn't to?" asked Yvette, turning to him.
"Certainly not! A gipsy fellow, with half a dozen dirty women trailing after him! Certainly not!" cried the tiny Jewess.[8]

Her outrage here is not moral, but purely conventional. Had she really left behind conventional morality, "false morality," she would not react in this way to the idea of the gipsy making love to Yvette. Her scandalized outrage reveals the hypocrisy of her "rebellion," which has been, obviously, purely self-serving and for show. She is nothing more than a "figurine."

"I wondered!" said Yvette. "Because it was rather wonderful, really! And it was something quite different in my life.

"I think," said the Major, taking his pipe from his mouth, "that desire is the most wonderful thing in life. Anybody who can really feel it, is a king, and I envy nobody else!" He put back his pipe.

The Jewess looked at him stupefied.

"But Charles!" she cried. "Every common low man in Halifax feels nothing else!"

"That's merely appetite," he said.

And he put back his pipe.'[9]

The comparison of "desire" and "appetite" recalls the earlier comparison of Granny's gluttonous appetite and Yvette's natural desire for life. The fact that Mrs. Eastwood fails to understand the difference aligns her with the mob. The Major may understand it, but he has compromised himself. He may envy desire, but he has clearly sacrificed it in his complacency. Because of his understanding, there is a poignancy about the Major which causes the reader to regret his compromise:

"That gipsy was the best man we had, with horses. Nearly died of pneumonia. I thought he was dead. He's a resurrected man to me. I'm a resurrected man myself, as far as that goes." He looked at Yvette. "I was buried for twenty hours under snow," he said. "And not much the worse for it, when they dug me out."

There was a frozen pause in the conversation.

"Life's awful!" said Yvette.

"They dug me out by accident," he said.

"Oh-" Yvette trailed slowly. "It might be destiny, you know."

To which he did not answer.'[10]

Rev. Saywell's outrage against Yvette's relationship with the Eastwoods is a fine parody of Mrs. Eastwood's outrage against Yvette's relationship with the gipsy. This irony ought now to be obvious to the reader, who should have recognized all the telltale signs of Mrs. Eastwood's underlying conventionality. (She did, after all, praise him in Chapter Seven as being "A very clever writer!"[11] whom she had read;

and we have no evidence of Mrs. Eastwood being capable of any intentional irony and ought therefore to accept her praise as sincere.) This is one of Lawrence's small laughs at the "conventionals": their prejudices and labellings are leveled as frequently at each other as at their real "enemies."

The rector's reaction here is an intensification of his earlier outburst against Yvette; his mad, hysterical diatribe is provoked by the spirit of Cynthia which he again sees in his "still-uncowed"[72] daughter. Behind the rector's hysterical fury is his fear of his daughter's contempt, the "slave's collar" worn by the "born cowed."[73] For, again, it is not really the Eastwoods themselves, but their circumstantial resemblance to his ex-wife and her young lover which enrages and terrifies the Rector. It is almost as if "She-who-was-Cynthia" had come back to take Yvette away from the Rector. So his fear of his daughter turning into another Cynthia is really a fear of his daughter turning on him in contempt, as Cynthia did, recognizing his inferiority.

But Yvette does not understand any of this. In fact, her mind is so pure that she does not even understand the nature of the crimes of which he is accusing her. By the time the Rector accuses her of "depravity," "lying," and "criminal lunacy," there has been much more evidence of these things in the Rector and his family than in Yvette, whose naive and simple mind struggles to comprehend the hysterical tirade of her demented father in a scene which is both comical and pitiful:

> "You know best yourself, what you have got," he sneered. "But it is something you had best curb, and quickly, if you don't intend to finish in a criminal-lunacy asylum."
>
> "Why?" she said, pale and muted, numbed with frozen fear. "Why criminal lunacy? What have I done?"
>
> "That is between you and your Maker," he jeered. "I shall never ask. But certain tendencies end in criminal lunacy,

unless they are curbed in time."

"Do you mean like knowing the Eastwoods?" asked Yvette, after a pause of numb fear.

"Do I mean like nosing round such people as Mrs. Fawcett, a Jewess, and ex-Major Eastwood, a man who goes off with an older woman for the sake of her money? Why yes, I do!"

"But you can't say that," cried Yvette. "He's an awfully simple, straightforward man."

"He is apparently one of your sort."

"Well. --In a way, I thought he was. I thought you'd like him too," she said, simply, hardly knowing what she said.

The rector backed in to the curtains, as if the girl menaced him with something fearful.

"Don't say any more," he snarled, abject. "Don't say any more. You've said too much, to implicate you. I don't want to learn any more horrors."

"But what horrors?" she persisted.

The very naivete of her unscrupulous innocence repelled him, cowed him still more.

Say no more!" he said, in a low, hissing voice. "But I will kill you before you shall go the way of your mother."

She looked at him, as he stood there backed against the velvet curtains of his study, his face yellow, his eyes distraught like a rat's with fear and rage and hate, and a numb, frozen loneliness came over her. For her too, the meaning had gone out of everything.'[4]

We are reminded of Kafka's "The Trial," in which a man is accused of an unnamed crime, and must defend himself against an irrational authority with whom he cannot communicate. The result there, as here, is a total demoralization and acceptance of an inexplicable guilt. The mob authority instills a sense of guilt in the individual who cannot understand the crime, and because he cannot understand it, he cannot defend himself or resist the persecution. Yvette succumbs to the rector's threats and tirade. Her capitulation is pathetic and comical, but in its dignity and understatement, it further contrasts with the ludicrous and inferior nature of the rector's bullying: "I can write a note and say you disapprove."'[5]

Unable to understand the nature of her crime, Yvette has nevertheless accepted the burden of her guilt, the basis of the "whole tradition of loyalty." And even the thought of the gipsy, which was once

comforting and healing, now fills her with a sense of fear and shame:

> Yet she felt a dreary blank when she had posted her letter. She was now even afraid of her own thoughts. She wanted, now, to be held against the slender, fine-shaped breast of the gipsy. She wanted him to hold her in his arms, if only for once, for once, and comfort and confirm her. She wanted to be confirmed by him, against her father, who had only a repulsive fear of her.
>
> And at the same time she cringed and winced, so that she could hardly walk, for fear the thought was obscene, a criminal lunacy. It seemed to wound her heels as she walked, the fear. The fear, the great cold fear of the base-born, her father, everything human and swarming. Like a great bog humanity swamped her, and she sank in, weak at the knees, filled with repulsion and fear of every person she met.'[6] [underlining mine]

What Lawrence has described here in this chapter is how the mob intimidates, overwhelms, and ultimately corrupts the finer sensibility of the individual. Denial of self, acceptance of guilt, resignation of spontaneity and expectation are followed by a hardening of the heart, and a lustreless will to survive. At the base of it all is a self-loathing. Her hatefulness and vengefulness cannot be attributed to her relationship with the gipsy, but to her failure to have a relationship with him--to her self-denial.

In her hardness and hatefulness, she now bears a striking resemblance to Aunt Cissie, into whose footsteps she has fallen. And like Aunt Cissie, the only pleasure left to her is that "pure, sheer hatred which is almost a joy. Her hate was so clear, that while she was feeling strong, she enjoyed it."[7] The focus of Yvette's hatred is the Mater, "whom she came to detest with all her soul."[8]

> The old woman sat with her big, reddened face pressed a little back, her lace cap perched on her thin white hair, her snub nose still assertive, and her old mouth shut like a trap. This motherly old soul, her mouth gave her away. It always had been one of the compressed sort. But in her great age, it had gone

> like a toad's lipless, the jaw pressing up like the lower jaw of a trap. The look Yvette most hated, was the look of that lower jaw pressing relentlessly up, with an ancient prognathous thrust, so that the snub nose in turn was pressed a little back, beneath the big, wall like forehead. The will, the ancient toad-like obscene will in the old woman, was fearful, once you saw it: a toad-like self-will that was godless, and less than human! It belonged to the old, enduring race of toads, or tortoises. And it made one feel that Granny would never die. She would live on, like these higher reptiles, in a state of semi-coma, forever.'[7]

In this description we feel the intensity of Yvette's hatred, and it is almost painful in its acuteness. It becomes clear at this point that while the obscene physical descriptions of the old lady have been symbolic of the mob, they also represent the tendency of such hatred to distort perception. For surely these descriptions are distorted, just as everything seen through the eyes of hatred is obscene, ugly, distorted. And hatred, Lawrence clearly reveals in this story, is not rebellion:

> Her life seemed now nothing but an irritable friction against the unsavoury household of the Saywells, in which she was immersed. She loathed the rectory with a loathing that consumed her life, a loathing so strong, that she could not really go away from the place. While it endured, she was spell-bound to it, in revulsion.[8] [underlining mine]

Yvette is wallowing in her hatred; she is bogged down by it, drowning in self-pity: "--an awful, smelly family that would never disperse, stuck half dead round the base of a fungoid old woman! How was one to cope with that?"[9] Hatred, like mimicry, is not rebellion; it is self-defeating, self-destructive, and leads to insanity.

Only the reappearance of the gipsy keeps her humanity alive and reminds her of the alternative she has relinquished. And as he "busied himself at his cart outside the white gate, with that air of silent and forever-unyielding outsideness,"[10] we get the full impression of Yvette on the other side of that "stubborn fence of unison," imprisoned inside

the rectory walls.

Only when she sees him is her hatred replaced by the more positive emotion of "liking," and again she identifies with the gipsy world:

> She liked the quiet, noiseless clean-cut presence of him. She liked that mysterious endurance in him, which endures in opposition, without any idea of victory. And she liked that peculiar added relentlessness, the disillusion in hostility, which belongs to after the war. Yes, if she belonged to any side, and to any clan, it was to his. Almost she could have found in her heart to go with him, and be a pariah gipsy-woman.[83]

But "Man or woman is made up of many selves,"[84] and Yvette's "individual self" is submerged and her "mob-self" has gained ground, as we see in her growing complacency: " . . . she liked comfort, and a certain prestige. . . . Also she like to chip against the pillars from the inside. She wanted to be safe under the temple roof. Yet she enjoyed chipping fragments off the supporting pillars."[85] She is beginning to sound more like Leo and her young "rebel" friends. But the analogy of the Philistine temple carries an implicit warning: when "Samson pulled the temple down,"[86] he went with it. The gipsy intuitively understands Yvette's vacillation (he has been through his own war), and warns her to be braver. He offers her his mystical knowledge to combat the lethargy of her soul. But what she needs is resurrection.

As Chapter Nine opens, we see Yvette, existing in a submerged, miserable state. We see her, in essence, drowning in the malaise of the middle-class, with ". . . a curious reluctance always towards taking action, or making any real move of her own. She always wanted someone else to make a move for her, as if she did not want to play her own game of life."[87] Her depiction here recalls the ineffectuality of the "six young rebels" earlier, "the keys of [her life] dangling inert in her

hands." Sitting on her wooden seat in the garden, "too lazy, too lazy, too lazy," Yvette is a perfect picture of the "static inertia" which Granny's rule perpetuates.

Watson maintains that her release from this state is brought about by the scapegoating of Granny: all of Yvette's problems are blamed on Granny, and killing off the old lady will free Yvette without her ever "making any real move of her own."** But on the basis of the pattern which I have traced here, I must disagree. This work is primarily about the problems of the individual to escape the mob, and it is about the "essential relations" which are necessary for the individual. The following chart may make this more clear:

CHARACTER/ACTION	REPRESENTATIVE SIGNIFICANCE
Cynthia leaves	Individuality, integrity and creativity are expelled from life, society's institutions (marriage, family)
Granny takes over	Mob takes over; Stagnation, hypocrisy set in; hatred, resentment spreads
Yvette wants to escape, rebel against the rectory family	Individual wants to escape mob, rebel against conventional morality.
Yvette seeks escape through:	
--"a really jolly social life"	meaningless diversion
--association with Eastwoods	following false rebels
--mimicking gipsies & Eastwoods	mimicry is no true rebellion or act of individuality
--hatred, revenge	no true rebellion; self-defeating, self-destructive
Yvette fails to resist the Rector (chooses to respect Granny)	individual defeated by mob

This leaves us with the question of how to rescue the individual, how to bring individuality and creativity back? Lawrence has stated elsewhere, and it seems to be his intention here, "You've got very badly to want to get rid of the old, before anything new will appear--even in the self,"[8] which brings us to the moment Watson calls "breath-takingly chilling and cold-blooded"[9]:

> It was not till [Yvette] was on the landing, dripping and shuddering till she could not stand erect, clinging to the banisters, while the house shook and the water raged below, that she was aware of the sodden gipsy, in paroxysms of coughing at the head of the stairs, his cap gone, his black hair over his eyes, peering between his washed-down hair at the sickening heave of water below, in the hall. Yvette, fainting, looked too, and saw Granny bob up, like a strange float, her face purple, her blind blue eyes bolting, spume hissing from her mouth. One old purple hand clawed at the banister rail, and held for a moment, showing the glint of a wedding ring.
>
> The gipsy, who had coughed himself free and pushed back his hair, said to that awful float-like face below:
>
> "Not good enough! Not good enough!"[10]

The gipsy, who has just heroically risked his life to save Yvette from the rushing flood waters makes no attempt to rescue Granny. This is disturbing; it is morally shocking in the conventional terms with which most of us are familiar. But these are exactly the terms against which Lawrence is arguing. And in this moment, he redefines morality, a morality based not on self-sacrifice, but on individual responsibility. Watson has noted that the selfishness which Lawrence advocates is always at the expense of someone, but there is also a victim in selflessness. What Lawrence has shown in this tale is that there is a difference between a selfishness which saves and a selfishness which consumes, and that there is a selfishness which is both necessary and moral.

Watson feels that Granny's drowning is intended to appease our collective (Yvette's, the readers', Lawrence's) desire for a scapegoat;

and "the old woman is the most obvious choice for the scapegoat."[3] He accuses Lawrence of manipulating us into hating Granny and, like Yvette, wanting her dead as a solution to Yvette's (and our?) problems. But the scene on the landing does not suggest such a motive, whereas there is evidence of their acting out of a spontaneous sense of self-preservation.

First of all, the picture we have of the "sodden gipsy" on the landing reinforces his vulnerability, a vulnerability which Lawrence has earlier suggested. The gipsy with his pneumonia-weakened lungs has risked his life for Yvette. But gazing down at the old worn-out Granny, he chooses not to risk his life to save hers. It is just as likely that the grasping hand of the obese old woman would pull the gipsy under before he could pull her out. Thus, morality is not a matter of adherance by rote to a certain code of behavior, but a matter of individual thought and discrimination. It is not a matter of unquestioning self-sacrifice, but of individual responsibility.

It is as if the gipsy intuitively knows what Lawrence has been revealing to us throughout the work. If we accept Granny as a "scapegoat," that is to say that she is blameless, innocent of any wrong-doing. This would keep us on the level of Yvette's thinking when she says, "Granny never actually did anybody any harm." Only if we restrict ourselves to the most superficial awareness, such as Granny's tripping Yvette and sending her down the stairs with a broken neck, can we believe she does no harm. Lawrence's evidence has been convincing: Granny manipulates her son to prevent his having a normal life, that is, a marriage; she puts unreasonable and selfish demands on her daughter; she hates her granddaughters; but most importantly, she is guilty of a

complacent way of life which is devoid of any creativity or morality. And this brings us back to the representative significance which is the core of this fable: "One old purple hand clawed at a banister rail, and held for a moment, showing the glint of a wedding ring."[3]

It is not a helpless, sightless, old woman who is being gotten rid of; it is the old, the worn-out conventions which have consumed all vitality and meaning from society and life. As the gipsy lets Granny be swept away by the flood waters, Lawrence urges us to let go of the "false morality" and complacency in which we are drowning our finer sensibilities. The toad symbol, the ugly, distorted physical descriptions, and finally the "glint of the wedding ring" are all intended to focus the reader on Granny's symbolic value and distance us from her human value. The diminishing of her human value is not part of a scapegoating process, but part of the fable process.

Watson says the flood "leaves us with a myth that is clearly designed to protect us from the truth."[4] The truth is, I believe he is saying, that our responsibility for ourselves cannot be substituted by blaming others for our problems. But far from protecting us from this truth, the fable insists on it. The first step towards enacting the new is to get rid of the old, but then the individual is still responsible for his own life.

It is not just that the flood takes Granny (Yvette and the gipsy let the flood take Granny), but it is Yvette's reaching out to the gipsy which saves her, although significantly she only reaches out to him after Granny is gone. Only after one lets go of the old can one reach out for the new.

> "Warm me!" she moaned, with chattering teeth. "Warm me! I shall die of shivering."
>
> A terrible convulsion went through her curled-up white body, enough indeed to rupture her and cause her to die.
>
> The gipsy nodded, and took her in his arms, and held her in a clasp like vice, to still his own shuddering. He himself was shuddering fearfully, and only semi-conscious. It was the shock.
>
> The vice-like grip of his arms round her seemed to her the only stable point in her consciousness. It was a fearful relief to her heart, which was strained to bursting. And though his body, wrapped round her strange and lithe and powerful, like tentacles, rippled with shuddering as an electric current, still the rigid tension of the muscles that held her clenched steadied them both, and gradually the sickening violence of the shuddering, caused by shock, abated, in his body first, then in hers, and the warmth revived between them. And as it roused, their tortured, semiconscious minds became unconscious, they passed away into sleep."[8]

They reach out to one another, individual to individual, and the essential relation is established: their lives are saved. From the flood in her soul, Yvette is resurrected by the gipsy's warmth, and the sleep they pass into is a kind of death, from which both emerge reborn.

Despite the "dramatic restoration of calm and sanity,"[9] the changes in the world to which Yvette returns are not drastic. Life after the flood is not anarchy; it is going to go on much the same as it did before. The family will stay together, but in a new, restructured home. The church will go on, but in a new rectory. The Rector, himself, as well as Aunt Cissie, has survived. Their tears, their joy, their relief suggest a new humanity released in them. And all the characters seem kinder, more human, and more <u>aware</u> of each other. Bob Framley, whose family has taken in the homeless Saywells, wants to acknowledge the gipsy with a medal. Moreover, there is a freshness to the characters which bespeaks a new beginning. The flood, having washed away the worst elements of the Rectory morality, Granny and the stuffy old rectory itself, has effected a symbolic cleansing and has left the family and

the community with a chance for a new beginning.

Yvette, who collapses "appropriately" into her father's arms when she climbs out of her bedroom, also seems not to be so radically changed. But her brave climb down down the ladder to safety symbolizes a less passive Yvette who will take greater responsibility for herself. Though she seems perfectly willing to return to her family, she will no longer conform to the hypocritical "traditions of loyalty," such as attending Granny's funeral. Though she yearns for the gipsy, she will probably marry Bob Framley before long, because the most significant change in Yvette is the wisdom of her being "acquiescent in the fact of [the gipsy's] disappearance."[7]

The gipsy is gone. That is the final significant detail of this tale. Watson has noted that Lawrence has also humanized him, given him a name, a very common name at that--Joe Boswell. But rather than placing the gipsy in a category of inferiority, I believe Lawrence intended just the opposite. Lawrence has humanized him by taking away the romantic, glamourous, "wraggle-taggle gipsyism" aspect of him. Since, through the gipsy, morality is revealed and defined, I think Lawrence means to say that morality is not a romantic, heroic, or idealistic concept, but an everyday way of knowing. "Gipsy" is a label, which Lawrence significantly removes, and leaves us with a sense of the man's individuality and humanity.

The tale ends realistically, defying the "happy" fairy-tale ending where Yvette would find love and freedom by running off with the gipsies and leaving her wicked family behind. The picture we have here is far more realistic, and Lawrence intends us, like Yvette, to see "the wisdom of it."[8] Yvette, left to her "singleness," must first learn to be able

to be alone, to be an individual before she is part of a pair. For rebellion is simply that--a matter of being able to be an individual. The gipsy, through his awareness of her, his desire for her, and his confirmation of her, was able to help Yvette reach a position of strength. Now she must, and will, be able to be alone.

Notes

[1] D.H. Lawrence, "Pornography and Obscenity," Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Anthony Beal (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), pp. 34-35.

[2] D.H. Lawrence, "The Captain's Doll," The Complete Short Novels (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 91.

[3] Lawrence, "The Captain's Doll," Short Novels, pp. 91-92.

[4] D.H. Lawrence, "Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious," Fantasia of the Unconscious and Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1960), pp. 244-45.

[5] F.R. Leavis, D.H. Lawrence, Novelist (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 178.

[6] See Footnote 2, "Introduction."

[7] Leavis, D.H.L.: Novelist, p. 349.

[8] Leavis, D.H.L.: Novelist, p. 353.

[9] Garry Watson, "'The Fact, and the Crucial Significance, of Desire': Lawrence's 'Virgin and the Gipsy,'" in English, XXXIV (Summer 1985), p. 146.

[10] Lawrence, "Whitman," Selected Literary Criticism, p. 400.

[11] D.H. Lawrence, "Art and Morality," Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers, ed. Edward McDonald (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), p. 525.

[12] D.H. Lawrence, The Virgin and the Gipsy (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), p. 3.

[13] Watson, p. 133.

[14] Lawrence, "Pornography and Obscenity," Criticism, p. 40.

[15] Lawrence, "Psychology and the Unconscious," Fantasia, p. 227.

[16] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 3.

[17] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 4.

[18] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 6.

[19] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 9.

[20] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 10.

[21] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 9.

[22] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 16.

[23] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 16-17.

[24] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 23-24.

[25] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 29-30.

[26] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 17.

[27] Lawrence, "Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious," Fantasia, p. 214.

[28] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 23.

[29] D.H. Lawrence, Women in Love (New York: Modern Library, 1950), p. 141.

[30] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 15.

[31] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 27-28.

[32] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 24-25.

[33] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 31-32.

[34] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 19.

[35] Leavis, D.H.L.: Novelist, p. 353.

[36] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 45.

[37] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 40.

[38] Watson, p. 142.

[39] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 142-43.

[40] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 49.

[41] Leavis, D.H.L., Novelist, p. 349.

[42] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 54-55.

[43] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 55.

[44] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 59.

[45] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 57.

[46] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 70.

[47] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 58.

[48] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 81.

[49] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 84.

[50] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 84.

[51] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 85.

[52] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 87.

[53] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 89.

[54] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 63.

[55] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 92-93.

[56] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 95.

[57] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 101-103.

[58] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 93.

[59] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 111.

[60] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 112.

[61] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 118-19.

[62] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 118.

[63] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 108.

[64] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 115.

[65] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 114.

[66] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 115.

[67] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 123-24.

[68] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 126-27.

[69] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 127.

[70] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 128.

[71] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 109.

[72] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 132.

[73] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 130.

[74] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 133-35.

[75] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 135.

[76] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 137.

[77] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 139.

[78] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 138.

[79] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 139-40.

[80] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 141.

[81] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 141.

[82] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 142.

[83] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 142-43.

[84] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 147.

[85] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 143.

[86] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 143.

[87] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 149.

[88] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 149.

[89] Lawrence, Women, p. 59.

[90] Watson, p. 152.

[91] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 158.

[92] Watson, p. 148.

[93] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 158.

[94] Watson, p. 153.

[95] Lawrence, Virgin, pp. 164-65.

[96] Watson, p. 151.

[97] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 174.

[98] Lawrence, Virgin, p. 174.

CHAPTER THREE

The Secret Sharer

In a letter to a friend, Joseph Conrad says, "'The Secret Sharer,' between you and me, is it. Eh? Every word fits and there's not a single uncertain note."[1] This seems to me a highly descriptive statement about The Secret Sharer, as well as about fables in general. It is also suggestive as to how this and other fables ought to be read. Conrad's "fit" reminds me of Leavis's "peculiarly insistent intention" as revealed by "character, episode, and so on--." Conrad's statement also suggests a kind of resolution, an answer which he has achieved in The Secret Sharer, and this too is suggestive of fable.

This particular work of Conrad's has been generally recognized as highly symbolic; it has been read as myth, allegory, and even as "a microcosm of Conrad's major themes"[2] in an effort to determine its significance, or exactly what the "fit" is. But in reading symbolic works, the critic should not forget that the insistence ought to be all on the part of the fable.

Albert Guerard's "night journey" theory, in his introduction to The Heart of Darkness and The Secret Sharer, is a mythopoeic manipulation of the text which is more faithful to Jung than to Conrad. He refers to both The Secret Sharer and Heart of Darkness as:

> dramas of consciousness and conscience, symbolic explorations of inward complexity. They are, like Faulkner's The Bear, stories of youth's initiation into manhood and knowledge, dramatized testings of personal strength and integrity, psychological studies in half-conscious identification.[3]

The initiation theme is obvious, particularly in The Secret Sharer, the work with which I am concerned here. Guerard's reading begins to go astray, however, when he attempts to answer the question: "Why does the narrator (the 'I') of The Secret Sharer protect the criminally impulsive Leggatt?"[4]

> In the unconscious mind of each of us slumber infinite capacities for reversion and crime. And our best chance for survival, moral survival, lies in frankly recognizing these capacities. At the beginning of . . . The Secret Sharer, the narrator is naively confident of success in the sea's "untempted life." The two men must come to know themselves better than this, must recognize their own potential criminality and test their own resources, must travel through Kurtz and Leggatt, before they will be capable of manhood ... manhood and "moral survival." The two novels alike exploit the ancient myth or archetypal experience of the "night journey" or a provisional descent into the primitive and unconscious sources of being. At the end of Heart of Darkness and The Secret Sharer the two narrators are mature men. And as Marlow and the young captain both sympathize with and condemn these images or symbols of their potential selves, so too does the novelist Conrad. It is this conflict between sympathy and a cold purifying judgment that gives intensity to the stories as works of art.[5]

He goes on to say:

> In the end the narrator has benefited from his dangerous traffic with Leggatt, benefited from this symbolic journey through an underground self. He has wholly outgrown the naive optimism which could rejoice in the "great security of the sea," in its "untempted life presenting no disquieting problems." The end of wisdom, for Conrad, was pessimism: an awareness that we are eternally menaced and most of all by ourselves.[6]

The problem with this interpretation seems to suggest itself even to Guerard himself:

> Reading the story thus, as a brilliant counterpart to the findings of modern psychology, we are likely to be puzzled by its last sentence. If Leggatt is symbolically a lower self capable of crime, fortunately expelled at the last--why is he also "a free man, a proud swimmer striking out for a new destiny"? This is a dark question, to which many answers may

> be given, and all of them uncertain. My own partial answer is to recall that Leggatt is the captain's double and symbol for his unconscious, but also a man of flesh and blood. By seeing his own dilemmas and difficulties in Leggatt, the captain has turned this man into a symbol and spirit, has deprived him of his humanity and "mere flesh." But at the end, emerging from his self-examination, the captain can see Leggatt as a separate and all human being. He lends the fugitive his hat, to protect him from the burning sun. And this hat--marking the division between the two selves--saves the captain and his ship; it is a marker, floating on the night sea. The captain, having overcome his necessary but egoistic identification with Leggatt, and seeing him now as flesh rather than shadowy spirit, restores to the stranger his identity. In this sense, at least, each is now "a free man, a proud swimmer striking out for a new destiny."[7]

It is not the captain who finally sees Leggatt for what he is. Guerard must contradict himself in order to make sense out of the tale. His "partial answer" (which in fact is more of an answer than what he said earlier) sounds more like a final manipulation, a reshuffling of the pieces to make them fit.

His misinterpretation centers, then, upon the representative significance of Leggatt and his relationship to and with the captain. In order to make The Secret Sharer support his theory, there must be a criminal, so that the captain can recognize his "own potential criminality" and "test [his] own resources" against it. Leggatt becomes the "embodiment of the captain's more instinctive, more primitive, less rational self,"[8] which must be acknowledged, but ultimately condemned. One suspects that Guerard began with the theory, and the reading followed. In a work in which "every word fits," we need to allow the pattern to take its own shape, to begin at the beginning, not with Leggatt, but with the captain. This means that if we are to understand the significance of the "Leggatt" character, we have to understand the significance of the "captain" character.

As the story opens, a young man is standing alone on the bridge of his ship, about to experience his first command, wondering about his ability to command and "how far [he would] turn out faithful to that ideal conception of one's own personality every man sets up for himself secretly."[9]

> On my right hand there were lines of fishing stakes resembling a mysterious system of half-submerged bamboo fences, incomprehensible in its division of the domain of tropical fishes, and crazy of aspect as if abandoned forever by some nomad tribe of fishermen now gone to the other end of the ocean; for there was no sign of human habitation as far as the eye could reach. To the left a group of barren islets, suggesting ruins of stone walls, towers, and blockhouses, had its foundations set in a blue sea that itself looked solid, so still and stable did it lie below my feet; even the track of light from the westering sun shone smoothly, without imperceptible ripple. And when I turned my head to take a parting glance at the tug which had just left us anchored outside the bar, I saw the straight line of the flat shore joined to the stable sea, edge to edge, with a perfect and unmarked closeness, in one leveled floor half brown, half blue under the enormous dome of the sky.'[10]

As the mind's eye follows the sweep of the narrator's gaze, the "impression conveyed through the senses" is one of isolation, alienation, and strangeness. The "strangeness" is conveyed by a sense of his not quite understanding what he sees, his unfamiliarity with the "mysterious system of half-submerged bamboo fences, incomprehensible" to him. The feeling of isolation--and even abandonment--comes through the eye which perceives "no sign of human habitation," "the barren islets," and "the ruins of stone walls."[13] The image of the disappearing tug establishes the sense of abandonment which will be central to the tale:

> the tug steaming right into the land became lost to my sight, hull and funnel and masts, as though the impassive earth had swallowed her up without an effort, without a tremor. My eye followed the light cloud of her smoke, now here, now there, above the plain, according to the devious curves of the stream, but always fainter and farther away, til I lost it at last behind the mitershaped hill of the great pagoda. And then

> I was left alone with my ship, anchored at the head of the Gulf of Siam.'[4]

This scene creates more than the "emotional atmosphere of place and time."[5] It defines the captain's position. This captain is a stranger to his ship, his crew, and the novelty of command. But the loneliness conveyed in this opening scene goes beyond the immediacy of this captain. It is the "loneliness of command"[6] which defines the role of captain itself--for to be in command is to be alone, and to be able to stand alone--not always the same thing. And broader yet, the position of command, self-command, defines the state of moral maturity. This is where the story begins. The young captain's "strangeness" is his lack of self-knowledge: the knowlege of what kind of a commander and what kind of a man he is going to be. He is anxious for the test which will bring him this knowledge; but he also needs to learn what it means to be in command.

It is his "strangeness," he tells us, which prompts him to stand the first watch himself, affording him the opportunity to "get on terms with the ship of which I knew nothing, manned by men of whom I knew very little more."[7] He is looking for answers in his solitude, but the answers he needs are not to be found in isolation, nor in the "comfort of quiet communion"[8] which he enjoys with himself in this solitude.

Despite his strangeness and the unfamiliarity of his situation, the young captain is remarkably confident, "naively confident,"[9] as Guerard says:

> I descended the poop and paced the waist, my mind picturing to myself the Indian Ocean, and up the Atlantic. All its phases were familiar enough to me, every characteristic, all the alternatives which were likely to face me on the high seas--everything! --except the novel responsibility of command. But I took heart from the reasonable thought that the ship was

> like other ships, the men like other men, and that the sea was not likely to keep any special surprises expressly for my discomfiture.[20]

Conrad's irony is clearly aimed at the captain's "naive confidence"--a confidence which suggests a slightly priggish moral complacency, as expressed in the following exaltation:

> And suddenly I rejoiced in the great security of the sea as compared with the unrest of the land, in my choice of that untempted life presenting no disquieting problems, invested with an elementary moral beauty by the absolute straightforwardness of its appeal and by the singleness of its purpose.[21]

The captain, thinking himself safely removed from the problems of humanity ("the unrest of the land"), is the very picture of complacency, with his cigar, his cozy sleeping suit, and his comfortable conclusions. This particular naive complacency is antithetical to the attainment of self-knowledge and idea of command this tale defines.

A prig is a person who embodies this kind of complacency. He is overprecise, smug, and narrow-minded, someone whose adherence to a code and faith in that code are absolute. This sounds very much like the kind of man Guerard accuses Conrad of having been: "a deeply conservative man, profoundly attached to the rigid laws and pitiless traditions of the sea."[22] And it does sound a bit like the kind of man the captain might become, when he expresses his annoyance at the ladder left hanging over the side:

> for exactitude in small matters is the very soul of discipline. Then I reflected that I had myself peremptorily dismissed my officers from duty, and by my own act had prevented the anchor watch being formally set and things properly attended to. I asked myself whether it was wise ever to interfere with the established routine of duties even from the kindest of motives.[23]

But our captain is a man motivated by kindness, and a sense of fairness; and it is this motivation which will counter his complacency.

These statements represent ironical foreshadowing, since the captain will exercise great "exactitude in small matters" to hide Leggatt, but it will not be in actions which fall under the heading of "the very soul of discipline." He appears to be more of a stranger to himself than he realizes, because the man who takes Leggatt into hiding does not bother to ask himself about "the wisdom of interfering with the established routine of duties." His initiation into manhood occurs as he relinquishes this unquestioning faith in any system or routine ("the books," as Captain MacWhirr would say).[34]

Guerard refers to the captain's "first impression of Leggatt" to substantiate his interpretation of Leggatt as the "embodiment of [the captain's] more instinctive, more primitive, less rational self":

> How does the narrator meet Leggatt in the first place? By irrationally dismissing the anchor-watch, and so leaving a rope ladder to hang over the side of the unmoving ship. And what is his first impression of Leggatt? "He was complete but for the head. A headless corpse!" --a being, that is, without intellect. Leggatt is ghostly, silvery and fishlike as he swims in the water--that water which has been, since the beginnings of literature and symbolism, an image for the unconscious life.[35]

Guerard's tendency to go by the books in interpreting symbols does not leave him receptive to Conrad's perfectly staged and delightful irony. Here is the captain, complacently puffing on his cigar, ruminating on the "elementary moral beauty" of a sea which holds no "special surprises expressly for [his] discomfiture," no "disquieting problems." We feel his shock just as we hear the plop and hiss of his cigar hitting the water as he looks over the rail of his ship and sees

"A headless corpse!"[36] That sight need not represent anything more than the great shock in store for any man who puffs along on that kind of complacency. In order to "fit," the shock and "disquieting problem" which destroy his complacency must rightfully come out of that very sea about which he is so complacent.

Guerard argues that the ladder is left hanging over the side as a direct result of the captain's "irrationality," thereby equating Leggatt with the captain's "less rational self." But it is just as much the result of "the kindest of motives," the captain's other stated motive which Guerard completely ignores: the captain stands the first watch because, "For the last two days the crew had had plenty of hard work, and the night before they had very little sleep."[37] The ladder may be a symbol for his breach of order, a break from the rigid adherence to code, but it is also a symbol of sympathy and compassion, thereby equating Leggatt with his more humane self.

Still, part of the captain's motivation was the idea that he could alleviate his "strangeness" in his solitude, "as if I expected in those solitary hours of the night to get on terms with the ship of which I knew nothing, manned by men of whom I knew very little more."[38] Part of Conrad's irony here is that the captain actually loses his solitude through this act, and attains a different sense of knowledge than he expected. The captain will ultimately find himself not in solitude, but in identification with another. If the ladder is a result of this motivation, then it must also be a symbol of the captain's link to Leggatt, which offers a "fit" between both motives, one a witting, the other an unwitting gesture towards humanity, and a correction of his tendency to withdraw from the human complexities into the comfort of

complacent abstractions.

The captain's very first response to Leggatt, even before he comes on board is a sympathetic curiosity, a willingness to hear what he has to say: "What's the matter?"[29] We ought not to be surprised by his compassionate interest in the other man--this is the captain who considerately sent his men to bed. But this sympathetic curiosity quickly turns to something else:

> "My name's Leggatt."
> The voice was calm and resolute. A good voice. The self-possession of that man had somehow induced a corresponding state in myself. It was very quietly that I remarked:
> "You must be a good swimmer."
> "Yes. I've been in the water practically since nine o'clock. The question for me now is whether I am to let go this ladder and go on swimming till I sink from exhaustion, or--to come on board here."
> I felt this was no mere formula of desperate speech, but a real alternative in the view of a strong soul.[30]

The captain looks at this man and sees that he is confident, rational, physically and morally strong--all of the qualities the captain hopes for himself, for they are the qualities of a commander. He takes him on board, clothes him, and listens to his story.

It has been remarked that The Secret Sharer is not a "Marlow tale." It is nevertheless a tale-within-a-tale; and the inner narrative has great significance to the larger. For the young captain who has just been wondering about his ability to perform and command, the story of the other young man's performance is of utmost significance.

> "[The man I killed] was one of those creatures that are just simmering all the time with a silly sort of wickedness. Miserable devils that have no business to live at all. He wouldn't do his duty and wouldn't let anybody else do theirs. But what's the good of talking! You know well enough the sort of ill-conditioned snarling cur--". . . .
> "It happened while we were setting a reefed foresail, at

dusk. Reefed foresail. You understand the sort of weather. The only sail we had left to keep the ship running; so you may guess what it had been like for days. Anxious sort of job, that. He gave me some of his cursed insolence at the sheet. I tell you I was overdone with this terrific weather that seemed to have no end to it. Terrific. I tell you--and a deep ship. I believe the fellow himself was half crazed with funk. It was no time for gentlemanly reproof, so I turned round and felled him like an ox. He up and at me. We closed just as an awful sea made for the ship. All hands saw it coming and took to the rigging, but I had him by the throat, and went on shaking him like a rat, the men above us yelling, 'Look out! look out!' Then a crash as if the sky had fallen on my head. They say that for over ten minutes hardly anything was to be seen of the ship--just the three masts and a bit of the forecastle head and of the poop all awash driving along in a smother of foam. It was a miracle that they found us, jammed together behind the forebits. It's clear that I meant business, because I was holding him by the throat still when they picked us up. He was black in the face. It was too much for them. It seems they rushed us aft together, gripped as we were, screaming 'Murder!' like a lot of lunatics, and broke into the cuddy. And the ship running for her life, touch and go all the time, any minute her last in a sea fit to turn your hair ~~gray~~ only a-looking at it. I understand that the skipper, too, started raving like the rest of them. The man had been deprived of sleep for more than a week, and to have this sprung on him at the height of a furious gale nearly drove him out of his mind. I wonder they didn't fling me overboard after getting the carcass of their precious shipmate out of my fingers. They had rather a job to separate us, I've been told. A sufficiently fierce story to make an old judge and respectable jury sit up a bit. The first thing I heard when I came to myself was the maddening howling of that endless gale, and on that the voice of the old man. He was hanging on to my bunk, staring into my face out of his sou-wester.

'Mr. Leggatt, you have killed a man. You can act no longer as chief mate of this ship.'

. . .

"You had better slip down into my stateroom now."[31]

Guerard suggests that the captain's fascination with and protection of Leggatt stems from some kind of adolescent sentimentalism which he will outgrow; because for Conrad, Guerard maintains, "a crime on shipboard, whether intended or not, was simply and irrevocably a crime."[32] Marooning Leggatt is proof of the captain's maturity, as he leaves behind his "own potential criminality."

Guerard implies that Leggatt's murder of the mate was unintentional, and the captain bases his sympathy on this. But Leggatt never says the crime was unintentional--in fact, he describes his action in terms of fierce determination. He does not offer (at this time) any kind of justification other than severe provocation. He claims neither self-defence nor necessity, and he shows no remorse for taking a man's life, a man he says had "no business to live at all." He does express a curious sense of detachment from the crime--as if he were not fully conscious of his act, and a natural aversion of a rational man for his act of irrational violence, for losing control and involving himself in "an ugly business."[33] The story would be too simple if Leggatt's act had been in any way unintentional. Leggatt did murder the man. Failure to recognize that would be easy sympathy--a refusal to confront the more complicated moral situation Conrad has presented.

There is no indication the captain ever sees the murder as unintentional (despite his suggestion to the Sephora captain). The murder itself seems to take secondary importance to Leggatt's performance in the storm. The act which concerns our captain is essentially the act of individual moral courage versus mob cowardice and hysteria. The story he hears is the story of a man, trained in the same tradition of duty as he himself has been, who met his test at sea. For it was Leggatt's duty, in the profoundest moral sense that he understood it, to save that ship in the storm. It was his test of how far he could go to prove faithful to his ideal sense of that duty. The action which he undertook to fulfill this ideal was an act of courage, initiative, and individuality. He alone maintained the presence of mind to act in the face of that terrible storm--and as we soon hear--not waiting for the command from his captain which was never forthcoming. Leggatt took

charge and gave the order which saved the ship. What the captain sees in Leggatt, then, is no criminal, but a commander, and a man who could do whatever it takes to fulfill his duty. It is no "easy sympathy"[34] which motivates the captain to hide Leggatt away in his room, but a profound sense of empathy and admiration.

In a tale where every word fits, the representative significance of Leggatt ought to be unmistakably clear. Far from representing the captain's "own criminality" or "less rational self," Leggatt is the embodiment of the captain's "ideal conception of his own personality which every man sets up for himself secretly." Leggatt not only tests the captain's ideal; he <u>is</u> his ideal.

But in this tale within a tale, another man's sense of duty is tested and defined, too: the <u>Sephora</u> captain's. It is tested once in the storm and again in Leggatt's stateroom:

> "I reckoned it would be dark before we closed with the land," he continued, so low that I had to strain my hearing, near as we were to each other, shoulder touching shoulder almost. "So I asked to speak to the old man. He always seemed very sick when he came to see me -- as if he could not look me in the face. You know, that foresail saved the ship. She was too deep to have run long under bare poles. And it was I that managed to set it for him. Anyway, he came. When I had him in my cabin--he stood by the door looking at me as if I had the halter around my neck already--I asked him right away to leave my cabin door unlocked at night while the ship was going through Sunda Straits. There would be the Java coast within two or three miles, off Angier Point. I wanted nothing more. I've had a prize for swimming my second year in the Conway."[35]

Leggatt knew that a conventional "old judge and a respectable jury"[36] would only repeat the hysterical indictment of his mates, unable to overlook the conventional crime in his unconventional act of heroism. In his full knowledge of himself as no criminal, Leggatt felt no obligation to submit to this indignation. All he wanted from his captain was a

chance to save himself, to escape society's hysterical persecution. He wanted it, believed he deserved it, but was not willing to kill anyone for it:

> "You'll say I might have chucked him aside and bolted out, there and then--it was dark already. Well, no. And for the same reason I wouldn't think of trying to smash the door. There would have been a rush to stop me at the noise, and I did not mean to get into a confounded scrimmage. Somebody else might have got killed--for I would not have broken out only to get chucked back, and I did not want any more of that work."[37]

These are not the words of a "criminally impulsive" or "irrational" man.

Leggatt wanted a chance to save himself, but a chance to escape an unfair indictment, a chance for justice. But he will not get it from the Sephora captain. I doubt if any reader would have considered it "easy sympathy" if the captain had turned his back in order to let Leggatt slip overboard. In fact, this would have required something not at all easy, the ability to make an independent moral judgement in the face of collective hostility, something this captain cannot do, for here is Guerard's by-the-book, "deeply conservative man, profoundly attached to the rigid laws and pitiless traditions of the sea . . . [for whom] a crime on shipboard, whether intended or not, was simply and irrevocably a crime."[38]

It is this captain who rigidly adheres to the law, even when his conscience (feeble as it may be) tells him it is not right. He knew what Leggatt did for the ship, and he knew that Leggatt was no "murdering brute,"[39] but his courage failed him in the face of Leggatt's situation, just as it failed him in the face of the storm. His adherence to the law is little more than fear of the law--fear of the mob behind it: "I represent the law here," he tells Leggatt. The element left out of the

"law" which the Sephora captain represents is justice, a justice based on individual moral judgment. He may represent "the law," but he does not represent command.

Leggatt's captain denies him, then, and in a very real sense, betrays him. The only guilt in this tale belongs to this captain, and the crime which has been committed has been committed against Leggatt. Reparation must come from our captain. This is to be his test. Our captain/narrator becomes then the judge and jury of Leggatt's case--and having heard the defense, it is only fair that he hear the prosecution. And so the Sephora captain arrives to tell his side of the tale, and to test our young captain yet further in how far he is prepared to go to defend his "ideal."

In answer to the question why the captain protects Leggatt, F.R. Leavis suggests the following:

> The young captain in The Secret Sharer faces in a protracted way the moral problem faced by the young captain of The Shadow Line when appealed to by the sick mate, Mr. Burns, not to leave him behind in a hospital. His duty as a ship's master is not to listen; not to burden further the overburdened crew with another sick and helpless man. But the young captain finds himself compelled by a finer ethic, finds himself as a seaman so compelled, not to leave Mr. Burns behind. As seaman to seaman he can't. That is only one element in The Shadow-Line. The equivalent is the main theme of The Secret Sharer.[42]

For Leavis, Leggatt is clearly no criminal. The captain's test is his recognition of this and his protection of the fugitive. The tale defines therefore not a "night journey," but a "finer ethic," and the significance of the tale "is not psychological, but moral,"[43] shifting the emphasis from consciousness to conscience. The ethic defined is "an insistence on the inescapable need for individual moral judgment and for moral conviction that is strong enough to forget codes and to defy law

and codified morality and justice."[43] This is, to a large extent, what it means to be able to stand alone, and what it means to command. And as it is this upon which Leggatt's survival depends, can we not say it is this upon which moral survival depends?

The visit of the Sephora captain brings heightened suspense to the tale, but it also fulfills several rhetorical purposes. First of all, as the old man's "version" apparently corroborates Leggatt's own account of the murder, we can better trust his honesty and character. Second, the strength of our captain's commitment is tested. Not only does he have to maintain his nerve confronting the old man, but the gravity of his own situation increases. "Since the hands had got to know his story, it would have been impossible to pass [Leggatt] off for anyone else, and an accidental discovery was to be dreaded now more than ever. . . ."[44] In totally aligning himself with the "criminal," he has made himself an accomplice to Leggatt's crime. It is a point of no return for him. Previously, it was only Leggatt's fate that was in question; it was only Leggatt that was in danger. Now the captain has taken Leggatt's danger as his own.

But our captain holds firm in his choice of loyalties, and once we have seen "the other side," we have to approve his decision. The most important function of the Sephora captain's visit is that it affords the young captain and the readers a clear picture of the alternative to defending Leggatt, as the old man personifies "the law" which persecutes him:

> The skipper of The Sephora had a thin red whisker all round his face, and the sort of complexion that goes with hair of that color; also the particular, rather smeary shade of blue. He was not exactly a showy figure; his shoulders were high, his stature but middling--one leg slightly more bandy than the

> other. He shook hands, looking vaguely around. A spiritless tenacity was his main characteristic, I judged. I behaved with a politeness which seemed to disconcert him. Perhaps he was shy. He mumbled to me as if he were ashamed of what he was saying; gave his name (it was something like Archbold--but at this distance of years I hardly am sure), his ship's name, and a few other particulars of that sort, in the manner of a criminal making a reluctant and doleful confession. He had had terrible weather on the passage out--terrible--terrible--wife aboard, too.[45]

In fables, physical characteristics tend to represent moral qualities, and we may therefore suspect something "smeary" about the old captain's character. The captain who denied Leggatt is not the kind of captain, or man, our narrator had in mind as an ideal, for nothing about him suggests a man in command. With his straggly beard, "smeary blue, unintelligent eyes," and bowed legs, the old man is hardly a character to inspire confidence. In his downtrodden manner he conveys a sense of indeterminant fear and guilt and, despite his "spiritless tenacity," a decided lack of conviction. In the final sentence of the above quotation, we can almost hear the whine of the intimidated old man. The expression which seems best to fit this description of the demoralized skipper is Lawrence's "born cowed." And he does, in fact, remind one very much of Lawrence's furtive rector.

He is definitely a striking contrast to Leggatt, a strong, athletic "well-knit young fellow" with a "concentrated, meditative expression."[46] The old man's vague, muddled thinking and his mumbling here are indicative of the confusion that beset him in the storm, just as Leggatt's determined and resolute manner, that "something unyielding in his character which [carried] him through so finely,"[47] reflects the fierce determination which possessed him in the storm.

Their physical and personality differences are, then, the

manifestations of their moral differences, as defined by their concept of duty. For the Sephora captain, his "painful duty" is to rigidly adhere with his "spiritless tenacity" to the very letter of the law. The source of his "tenacity" (for we cannot call it conviction) is his fear of the law (and fear of anyone and anything outside of that law):

> "You were very anxious to give up your mate to the shore people, I believe?"
> He was. To the law. His obscure tenacity on that point had in it something incomprehensible and a little awful; something, as it were, mystical, quite apart from his anxiety that he should not be suspected of "countenancing any doings of that sort." Seven-and thirty virtuous years at sea, of which over twenty of immaculate command, and the last fifteen in the Sephora, seemed to have laid him under some pitiless obligation.[48]

This defines the captain's misconstrued sense of duty, a sense of duty which reflects a mind incapable of "individual moral judgment." The old man's abandonment of Leggatt is indicative of his abandonment of any individual conviction.

It also reveals the consequences of this kind of conformity, and the fear which is its dominant characteristic. The old captain is afraid to stand alone, "afraid of the men, and also of that old second mate of his. . . ."[49] He is afraid for his reputation, afraid of scandal. The consequence of this "spiritless tenacity" is fear, an indeterminate sense of guilt, and cowardice. It provides no real courage to fall back on when confronted by "things you find nothing about in books."[50] In the storm, the old man's courage failed him. His claim to have been responsible (along with God) for saving the ship, provokes Leggatt into revealing the depth of the old man's cowardice, and the kind of dishonesty that usually accompanies it:

> "The man told you he hardly dared to give the order."

> I understood the reference to be to that saving foresail.
> "Yes. He was afraid of it being lost in the setting."
> "I assure you he never gave the order. He may think he did, but he never gave it. He stood there with me on the break of the poop after the maintopsail blew away, and whimpered about our last hope--positively whimpered aloud about it and nothing else--and the night coming on! To hear one's skipper go on like that in such weather was enough to drive any fellow out of his mind. It worked me up into a sort of desperation. I just took it into my own hands and went away from him, boiling, and---. But what's the use telling you? You know! . . . Do you think that if I had not been pretty fierce with them I should have got the men to do anything? Not it! The bosun perhaps? Perhaps! It wasn't a heavy sea--it was a sea gone mad! I suppose the end of the world will be something like that; and a man may have the heart to see it coming once and be done with it--but to have to face it day after day--I don't blame anybody. I was precious little better than the rest. Only--I was an officer of that old coat-wagon, anyhow--"
> "I quite understand."[51]

Far from finally coming to acknowledge Leggatt's guilt, as Guerard suggests, the young captain understands totally what happened to the young mate in that storm--and totally exonerates him once and for all: "The same strung-up force which had given twenty-four men a chance, at least, for their lives, had in a sort of recoil, crushed an unworthy mutinous existence."[52]

What the captain understands is not only the nature of Leggatt's innocence, but the nature of the old captain's guilt. The old man's moral failure, his failure of courage, resulted in the chaos on that ship. Nobody was in charge. With no one in command, the men were essentially abandoned. "It worked me up into a sort of desperation," Leggatt confessed.[53] In another story of moral isolation, Conrad tells us: "No human being could bear a steady view of moral solitude without going mad."[54] If Leggatt experienced a kind of temporary insanity, it was brought on by the sense of abandonment, the "great moral loneliness"[55] which proved too much for him. It is this state of desperation or madness in which Leggatt murders the mate.

The ability of a calm and steady nature to ward off hysteria is indicated earlier in this work when the young captain first sees Leggatt: "The voice was calm and resolute. A good voice. The self-possession of that man had somehow induced a corresponding state in myself."[56] But the case is made emphatically in another of Conrad's works about a ship in a storm, Typhoon. The steadfast presence and courage of Captain MacWhirr facing his "sea gone mad" keeps his men sane and able to perform the duties which save that ship. "Is it you, sir? Is it you, sir?" The men cry out in the howling darkness. "Yes!" Cries Captain MacWhirr, heartily.[57] He is there for them, and that makes all the difference. So it was not a "steady view" of the "sea gone mad" which drove Leggatt to desperation, but a "steady view" of his whimpering captain. If anyone is responsible for the mate's death, it was the old captain, as he was responsible for the chaos which led to it.

Our young captain now understands the whole situation. He understands exactly what happened to Leggatt, what it means to be in command, and what it takes.

The main theme of The Secret Sharer may be the necessity of "individual moral judgment," but, as Robert Scholes says in his book The Fabulators, "Like all good fables, it is instructive in many things beyond its immediate moral."[58] Moral survival depends on something more than individuality, and this something else is expressed in the following excerpt from one of Conrad's letters:

> . . . if one be deserving and fortunate, one may perchance attain to such clearness of sincerity that at last the presented vision of regret or pity, of terror or mirth, shall awaken in the hearts of the beholders that feeling of

> unavoidable solidarity; of the solidarity in mysterious origin, in toil, in joy, in hope, in uncertain fate, which binds men to each other and all mankind to the visible world.[59]

If The Secret Sharer stresses the need for individual judgement, it also stresses the need for solidarity, for communication. The complexity and intensity of the tale is the relationship between individuality and solidarity, the supreme difficulty of striking that most delicate balance between the two. And this is no simple thing.

Besides ignoring all of Conrad's clues as to the significance of Leggatt and his captain, Guerard's "night journey" interpretation ignores the nature of the relationship between Leggatt and the younger captain:

> In the end the narrator has benefited from his dangerous traffic with Leggatt, benefited from his symbolic journey through an underground self. He has outgrown the naive optimism which could rejoice in the 'great security of the sea' in its 'untempted life presenting no disquieting problems.' The end of wisdom for Conrad, was pessimism: an awareness that we are eternally menaced, and most of all by ourselves.[60]

Despite the undeniable danger and risk in their relationship, the benefits it held for both Leggatt and the young captain are of a far different and greater nature than Guerard suggests.

The young captain, in the "breathless pause at the threshold"[61] of his first command, longs for knowledge. And in response to his need, Leggatt surfaces, a man who is both the embodiment of his ideal and the test of his fidelity to it. In his story and his behaviour, Leggatt exemplifies the steadfastness, the moral courage, the self-command which the captain recognizes as necessary to command his ship. And in the very real danger that Leggatt brings to the young captain--he shows him that

such courage and strength are not a matter of "heroic sublimity," of adolescent posturing, or complacent resignation to codes, but a terrifying, sometimes disastrous, testing of all one's resources. The benefit the young captain derives from this relationship is, then, a confirmation of what his duty is to be and of his ability to perform it. But what critics generally tend to ignore in reading The Secret Sharer is that the captain does much more for Leggatt than saving him from a "pitiless" law.

The Leggatt whom the captain finds at the end of that ladder is a fugitive, about to succumb to the despair of his situation:

> "And, lo and behold! there was a ladder to get hold of. After I gripped it I said to myself, 'What's the good?' When I saw a man's head looking over I thought I would swim away presently and leave him shouting--in whatever language it was. I didn't mind being looked at. I--I liked it. And then you speaking to me so quietly--as if you had expected me--made me hold on a little longer. It had been a confounded lonely time--I don't mean while swimming. I was glad to talk a little to somebody that didn't belong to the Sephora. As to asking for the captain, that was a mere impulse. It could have been no use, with all the ship knowing about me and the other people pretty certain to be round here in the morning. I don't know--I wanted to be seen, to talk with somebody, before I went on. I don't know what I would have said . . . 'Fine night, isn't it?' or something of the sort."[63]

Leggatt's isolation in confinement on board the Sephora had been more than physical. Surrounded by a hostile crew who would not or could not understand him, Leggatt's moral isolation had become intolerable, and pushed him literally over the edge. It is worth noting here that the only two "impulsive" acts Leggatt commits are acts of desperation in the face of moral abandonment by his captain--once in the storm and again in his stateroom. This isolation had deprived him of his life as much as any execution. And when Leggatt jumps off the Sephora, we ought to consider another classic symbolic value of water: rebirth.

If "A man's real life is that accorded to him in the thoughts of other men by reason of respect or natural love,"[63] then Leggatt in essence lost his real life in the condemnation he experienced on the Sephora. He goes into the water and surfaces to come on board another ship, where his life will be restored to him through "respect" and "natural love." What he wanted from his fellow man was "to be seen, to talk to somebody,"[64] and to be heard. The captain gazing down upon him in the phosphorescent water was a relief, a comfort and a confirmation. It is this Leggatt expresses every time he says to the captain, "You understand," "You know!" The nature and benefit of their "mysterious communication" is most movingly expressed in Leggatt's second to last dialogue with the captain:

> "As long as I know that you understand," he whispered. "But of course you do. It's a great satisfaction to have got somebody to understand. You seem to have been there on purpose." And in the same whisper, as if we two whenever we talked had to say things to each other which were not fit for the world to hear, he added, "It's very wonderful."[65]

The captain gives Leggatt more than a physical refuge; he gives him a "moral refuge, a refuge of confidence."[66] The captain's understanding gives Leggatt more than just a a chance to make it to shore. Through his confirmation, the captain gives Leggatt back his real life, his moral integrity, so that when he "lowered himself into the water to take his punishment . . . [it was as] a free man, a proud swimmer striking out for a new destiny,"[67] no longer the fugitive he was when he jumped the Sephora. In the refuge of the captain's confidence, Leggatt regains his strength to go on.

Still, it is undeniable that the captain's relationship with Leggatt does become dangerous, debilitating to the young captain. But it

is not the nature of his relationship with his other self, but the extent of it which is dangerous. The insistence on the double identity has been criticized as being debilitating, damaging to the story itself:

> Excessive emphasis on the psychological phenomenon of the alter ego belabors what is the most obvious and perhaps the weakest part of the story. If Conrad stressed any one thing, he stressed the resemblance, both physically and psychologically, between the Captain and the fugitive Leggatt. The constant parallel descriptions of the two men, the use of doubles, doubling, second self, secret self, other self and so on, are tedious. The repetition is as evident in this story as Marlow's use of qualifying adjectives in Heart of Darkness. In both stories, of course, much still remains after we have put the obvious behind us.[8]

Perhaps the insistence on the double identity is simply a flaw, like the "adjectival insistence" in Heart of Darkness. But there is always the possibility that Conrad knew what he was doing, that this insistence was part of the "fit." In other words, the insistence itself may be part of the representative significance of the fable, intentionally overdone. But we ought to recognize that the overemphasis comes from our narrator, and not our author. Letting Leggatt go will be the captain's last lesson and test.

Like Yvette in The Virgin and the Gipsy, the test of the captain's independence is being able to be alone; and, thus, as the gipsy leaves Yvette, Leggatt must leave the captain. Of Yvette, Lawrence said, "her young soul knew the wisdom of it." For Conrad too, this mature acceptance seems much more like "the end of wisdom"[9] than pessimism, a wisdom which our young captain finds difficult to accept.

When the individual withdraws from the mob, the tendency to become dependent on another individual is very great, but must be overcome. Leggatt (like Yvette's gipsy) has been instrumental in developing the

captain's "individual moral judgment," but in his total absorption with his "other self," the captain's judgment is compromised--his ability to command endangered. Now he must be "able to be alone," or become his own victim.

The wonderful and "mysterious communication" between the two men culminates in the young captain's successfully standing up to the Sephora captain's "investigation." It is this visit which brings the captain his crucial test of courage and steadfastness. It is also as a result of this visit that Leggatt breaks down and reveals his weakness, his vulnerability, his humanity. As he relives that moment in the storm, we hear in his "earnest whisper" the terror, the desperation, the courage and the madness that ruined his life and possibly his "ideal conception" of himself. And the young captain, as if he had "been there on purpose," simply, unequivocally understands and accepts, offering Leggatt the vindication he needs:

> "I quite understand," I conveyed that sincere assurance into his ear. He was out of breath with whispering: I could hear him pant slightly. It was all very simple. The same strung-up force which had given twenty-four men a chance, at least, for their lives, had, in a sort of recoil, crushed an unworthy mutinous existence.'*

In their confirmation of one another, their relationship has fulfilled its usefulness. Conrad makes this perfectly clear in the very next line:

> But I had no leisure to weigh the merits of the matter--footsteps in the saloon, a heavy knock. "There's enough wind to get under way with, sir." Here was the call of a new claim upon my thoughts and even upon my feelings.
>
> "Turn the hands up," I cried through the door. "I'll be on deck directly."
>
> I was going out to make the acquaintance of my ship. Before I left the cabin our eyes met--the eyes of the only two strangers on board. I pointed to the recessed part where the little campstool awaited him and laid my finger on my lips. He made a gesture--somewhat vague--a little mysterious,

accompanied by a faint smile, as if of regret.'[1]

Duty calls him back, and from here on, the relationship is a liability: I was not wholly alone with my command; for there was that stranger [no longer "my other self"] in my cabin. Or rather, I was not completely and wholly alone with [my ship]. Part of me was absent.'[2] This results in some rather peculiar behaviour on his part, such as whispering to his mate in that fashion of his speech with Leggatt:

> --and I could not help noticing the roundess of his eyes. These are trifling instances, though it's to no commander's advantage to be suspected of ludicrous eccentricities. But I was also more seriously affected. There are to a seaman certain words, gestures, that should in given conditions come as naturally, as instinctively as the winking of a menaced eye. A certain order should spring on to his lips without thinking; a certain sign should get itself made, so to speak, without reflection. But all unconscious alertness had abandoned me. I had to make an effort of will to recall myself back (from the cabin) to the conditions of the moment. I felt that I was appearing an irresolute commander to those people who were watching me more or less critically.
>
> And besides, there were the scares.'[3]

The "scares" of the close calls of Leggatt's being discovered push the captain to accept what he does not want to. It is time for him to be alone, time for him to give himself "to the conditions of the moment," which is his duty. The insistence on maintaining the double relationship has become debilitating to the captain's command of the ship.

And it is Leggatt, whose earlier "faint smile...of regret" forecasted their parting, who acknowledges the necessity of ending the relationship:

> "You must maroon me..."
>
> "Maroon you! We are not living in a boy's adventure tale," I protested. His scornful whispering took me up.
>
> "We aren't indeed! There's nothing of a boy's tale in this. But there's nothing else for it. I want no more. You don't suppose I am afraid of what can be done to me? Prison or

> gallows or whatever they may please. But you don't see me coming back to explain such things to an old fellow in a wig and twelve respectable tradesmen, do you? What can they know whether I am guilty or not--or of what I am guilty, either? That's my affair. What does the Bible say? 'Driven off the face of the earth.' Very well. I am off the face of the earth now. As I came at night so I shall go."
>
> "Impossible!" I murmured. "You can't."
>
> "Can't? Not naked like a soul on the Day of Judgment. I shall freeze on to this sleeping suit. The Last Day is not yet--and . . . you have understood thoroughly. Didn't you?"
>
> I felt suddenly ashamed of myself. I may say truly that I understood -- and my hesitation in letting that man swim away from my ship's side had been a mere sham sentiment, a sort of cowardice.
>
> "It can't be done now till next night," I breathed out."[4]

The act of letting Leggatt go is more difficult that the act of hiding him away, for Leggatt has also become for the captain a "refuge of confidence." But both men finally come to understand "the wisdom of it." The time for testing is over. It is now time for the performance of duty. But the captain's first duty to perform (as he represents the law) is to administer justice to Leggatt.

The decision is made to "maroon" Leggatt on the hopefully inhabited island of Koh-ring, and the captain brings the ship in close to minimize Leggatt's swim:

> I came out on deck slowly. It was now a matter of conscience to shave the land as close as possible--for now he must go overboard whenever the ship was put in stays. Must! There could be no going back for him. After a moment I walked over to leeward and my heart flew into my mouth at the nearness of the land on the bow. Under any circumstances I would not have held on a minute longer. The second mate had followed me anxiously.
>
> I looked on till I felt I could command my voice.
>
> "She will weather," I said then in a quiet tone.
>
> "Are you going to try that, sir?" he stammered out incredulously.
>
> I took no notice of him and raised my tone just enough to be heard by the helmsman.
>
> "Keep her good full."
>
> "Good full, sir."
>
> The wind fanned my cheek, the sails slept, the world was silent. The strain on watching the dark loom of the land grow

> bigger and denser was too much for me. I had shut my eyes -- because the ship must go closer. She must! The stillness was intolerable. Were we standing still?
>
> When I opened my eyes the second view started my heart with a thump. The black southern hill of Koh-ring seemed to hang right over the ship like a towering fragment of the everlasting night. On that enormous mass of blackness there was not a gleam to be seen, not a sound to be heard. It was gliding irresistibly toward us and yet seemed already within reach of the hand. I saw the vague figures of the watch grouped in the waist, gazing in awed silence.
>
> "Are you going on, sir?" inquired an unsteady voice at my elbow.
>
> I ignored it. I had to go on."[75]

The question which bothered me in my first reading of The Secret Sharer was why so close? The act does, of course, provide a final test for the captain--he learns how far he can push the ship, the crew, and his own nerves. He finally stands up to his crew, instead of being intimidated by them. And it is the final test of his fidelity to Leggatt, to his conscience. But still, why so close? A swimmer like Leggatt could easily swim a couple of miles. Where is the moral justification of risking, unnecessarily, all those lives, for one man? The question is something like why did Leggatt have to kill the mate--why did he have to go that far? The "answer" to one is perhaps contained in the "answer" to the other: "The same strung-up force which had given twenty-four men a chance, at least for their lives, had in a sort of recoil, crushed an unworthy mutinous existence." Leggatt risked everything to give those twenty-four men a chance, and they responded with betrayal and injustice. This captain, this crew, must now risk everything to give Leggatt "a chance, at least, for [his] life."

> "Give the mate a call," I said to the young man who stood at my elbow as still as death. "And turn all hands up."
>
> My tone had a borrowed loudness reverberated from the height of the land. Several voices cried out together: "We are all on deck, sir."[76]

The crew of his ship line the deck, in unwitting affirmation of the man who represents "that which saves" all of humanity.

With this final act of reparation, the captain can finally "maroon" Leggatt, "[forget] the secret stranger ready to depart"[77] (no longer his secret self, his double, his other self), and concentrate on the precarious fate of his ship:

> I swung the mainyard and waited helplessly. She was perhaps stopped, and her very fate hung in the balance, with the black mass of Koh-ring like the gate of the everlasting night towering over her taffrail. What would she do now? Had she way on her yet? I stepped to the side swiftly, and on the shadowy water I could see nothing except a faint phosphorescent flash revealing the glassy smoothness of the sleeping surface. It was impossible to tell--and I had not learned yet the feel of my ship. Was she moving? What I needed was something easily seen, a piece of paper, which I could throw overboard and watch. I had nothing on me. To run down for it I didn't dare. There was no time. All at once my strained, yearning stare distinguished a white object floating within a yard of the ship's side. White on the black water. A phosphorescent flash passed under it. What was that thing? . . . I recognized my own floppy hat. It must have fallen off his head . . . and he didn't bother.'[78]

Guerard says the hat "marks the division between the two selves,"[79] and thereby it is the captain's dismissal of his other self which ultimately saves the ship. But Conrad emphatically tells us the hat is a symbol of compassion:

> --the expression of my sudden pity for his mere flesh. It had been meant to save his homeless head from the dangers of the sun. And now--behold--it was saving the ship, by serving me for a mark to help out the ignorance of my strangeness. Ha! It was drifting forward, warning me just in time that the ship had gathered sternway. . . .
>
> . . . "She's round," passed in a tone of intense relief between two seaman.[80]

It is this compassion which "restores to the stranger (Leggatt) his identity."[81] The hat, a gesture of the captain's "pity for his mere

flesh," reflects the captain's initial sympathy when he first "rescued" Leggatt from the sea, a gesture which, of course, saved more than his mere flesh. The hat floats back to him with the knowledge he desperately needs to save his ship, symbolizing the knowledge Leggatt brought to the captain, in exchange, so to speak, for his compassion.

The hat must also be recognized as representative of the captain's commitment to protect and defend Leggatt, his "individual moral judgment." This independence, paradoxically, results in sending Leggatt away. And hence we have the captain's final "declaration of independence":

> And I was alone with her. Nothing! no one in the world should stand now between us, throwing a shadow on the way of silent knowledge and mute affection, the perfect communion of a seaman with his first command.[82]

It must be recognized that it is not only Leggatt of whom the captain is free. He is now free of any voice, law, book, code or group which might come between him and his conscience, his command.

And the final scene of The Secret Sharer, in contrast to the opening, makes the last important point:

> Walking to the taffrail, I was in time to make out, on the very edge of a darkness thrown by a towering black mass like the very gateway of Erebus--yes, I was in time to catch an evanescent glimpse of my white hat left behind to mark the spot where the secret sharer of my cabin and of my thoughts, as though he were my second self, had lowered himself into the water to take his punishment: a free man and a proud swimmer striking out for a new destiny.[83]

The sense of isolation, the sense of being abandoned by all of humanity, is gone. The hat remains, a symbol "of the solidarity in mysterious origin, in toil, in joy in hope, in uncertain fate, which binds men to

each other and all mankind to the visible world."[84] It is not in isolation that we find ourselves, but in the human community.

In its treatment of the individual, The Secret Sharer seems to be very much the same kind of thing as The Virgin and the Gipsy. And in fact, D.H. Lawrence's statement from "Art and Morality" is as relevant to Conrad's work as it is to Lawrence's:

> The true artist doesn't substitute immorality for morality. On the contrary, he always substitutes a finer morality for a grosser. And as soon as you can see a finer morality, the grosser becomes relatively immoral.[85]

A finer morality, for each of these writers, seems to be a matter of sincerity, of individual and genuine perception. But it is not in isolation or in self-absorption that man fulfills his moral potential. Yvette and the young captain both reject worn-out institutions and rigid codes. Yet both remain committed to their community. Yvette returns to her family, her society; and the captain returns to his crew, committing himself to, and assuming responsibility for, them. Both of them are able to do so after they find wisdom, comfort and strength through a "loving involvement" with another. John Marcher, on the other hand, because of his "cultivated detachment" and total preoccupation with himself, never finds these, nor does he ever find a place in any community.

Notes

[1] Frederick R. Karl, A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1969, p. 231.

[2] Karl, p. 233.

[3] Albert Guerard, introd., The Heart of Darkness and The Secret Sharer, by Joseph Conrad (New York: The New American Library, 1950), p. 8.

[4] Guerard, pp. 8-9.

[5] Guerard, p. 9.

[6] Guerard, p. 11.

[7] Guerard, p. 12.

[8] Guerard, p. 11.

[9] Joseph Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," The Portable Joseph Conrad, ed. Morton Dauwen Zabel, Revised Ed. (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1976), p. 651.

[10] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 648.

[11] Conrad, "The Condition of Art," Portable, p. 707.

[12] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 684.

[13] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 648.

[14] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 648.

[15] Conrad, "The Condition of Art," Portable, p. 707.

[16] Conrad, "Typhoon," Portable, p. 227.

[17] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer, Portable, p. 652.

[18] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer, Portable, p. 650.

[19] Guerard, p. 9.

[20] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 653.

[21] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 653.

[22] Guerard, p. 10.

[33] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 653.

[34] Conrad, "Typhoon," Portable, p. 287.

[35] Guerard, p. 11.

[36] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 654.

[37] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 652.

[38] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 652.

[39] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 655.

[40] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 656.

[41] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, pp. 659-60.

[42] Guerard, p. 10.

[43] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 657.

[44] Guerard, p. 10.

[45] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, 663.

[46] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, pp. 659-60.

[47] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 663.

[48] Guerard, p. 10.

[49] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 663.

[50] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 664.

[51] F.R. Leavis, "The Secret Sharer," Anna Karenina and Other Essays (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967), p. 111.

[52] Leavis, p. 114.

[53] Leavis, p. 114.

[54] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 680.

[55] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, pp. 672-73.

[56] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 657.

[57] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 687.

[58] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 675.

[59] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 663.

[60] Conrad, "Typhoon," Portable, p. 287.

[51] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 691.

[52] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 681.

[53] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 681.

[54] Joseph Conrad, Under Western Eyes (London: The Gresham Publishing Co. Ltd., 1925), p. 39.

[55] Conrad, Eyes, p. 307.

[56] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 656.

[57] Conrad, "Typhoon," Portable, p. 230.

[58] See Endnote #23, Introduction.

[59] Conrad, "The Condition of Art," Portable, p. 708.

[60] Guerard, p. 11.

[61] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 649.

[62] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 667.

[63] Conrad, Eyes, p. 14.

[64] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 667.

[65] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 688.

[66] Conrad, Eyes, p. 32.

[67] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 699.

[68] Karl, pp. 231-32.

[69] Guerard, p. 11.

[70] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 681.

[71] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 682.

[72] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 682.

[73] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, pp. 682-83.

[74] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 688.

[75] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, pp. 695-96.

[76] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 696.

[77] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 697.

[78] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 698.

[79] Guerard, p. 12.

[80] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 699.

[81] Guerard, p. 12.

[82] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 699.

[83] Conrad, "The Secret Sharer," Portable, p. 699.

[84] Conrad, "The Condition of Art," Portable, p. 709.

[85] D.H. Lawrence, "Art and Morality," in Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers, ed., Edward McDonald (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), p. 525.

CONCLUSION

Because of its length, the novella provides a perfect form for isolating, exploring, and resolving a moral issue, which is essentially the function of the moral fable, and what we have seen in the three novellas discussed here. The novella is long enough for adequate development, but not too long to sustain such a concentrated inquiry. The length and technique of focussing lead to technical devices which have themselves been isolated and explored, but are well enough defined as "the art of concentration that uses always the minimum--the loaded word and the uniquely representative act."[1]

While defining the various devices and techniques of selectivity the novella uses, too many critics have failed to acknowledge the emotional function of them, as if insisting on the intellectual or theoretical aspects of a work gives it greater credibility or seriousness. And, in fact, such early fables as Rasselas and Candide did not elicit much of an emotional response from their readers; but the moral fables examined here reflect the deeper psychological and emotional treatment of character and theme which emerged in the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century novels. It is useful to understand how the fable devices call attention to the representative significance of details and characters, to alert us to the symbolic value of the story; but we still need to acknowledge the intensely emotional appeal of the "loaded word and the uniquely representative act," and the role of the emotional response in the moral fable. Even Rasselas contains the lesson that emotions can never be replaced by theory (in the episode with the

stoic philosopher whose philosophy cannot sustain him in the face of his daughter's death).

Each of these three fabulists, Henry James, D.H. Lawrence, and Joseph Conrad, uses the "loaded word and uniquely representative act" to engage the readers emotionally. In The Beast in the Jungle, James makes us feel an intense frustration at Marcher's thickheadedness and a disgust at his selfishness in his exchanges with May Bartram. And although we must feel sorry for the ever-constant, never-acknowledged May Bartram, our primary response to her is an awareness and appreciation of her lovingness--for what she must surely represent is "loving involvement"[2]; and we feel an affection for this intelligent, giving, compassionate woman. Our response is, in fact, the very response Marcher ought to have given, but fails to. Our response, compared to Marcher's lack of response, is, therefore, the "moral" of the story. We could not understand Marcher's failure without our own emotional response.

Similarly, in The Virgin and the Gipsy, we want Yvette to be with the gipsy. Lawrence creates this anticipation in us and plays on it from the beginning--especially at the moment when Yvette is kept from entering the gipsy's caravan by the arrival of the Eastwoods. The delay is not arbitrary: Lawrence keeps us waiting until he has made it very clear what her relationship with the gipsy is all about. And at the end of the story, when we might anticipate and want the typical happy ending that Sheldon Sacks referred to as "action"--that is, for the hero and heroine to live happily ever after together--Lawrence reminds us that it is the significance of their relationship which is important, and that remains after the gipsy is gone. We, like Yvette, must come to know the

"wisdom of it." And at the same time, by presenting such a loathsome picture of her, Lawrence makes us want Granny to be defeated.

But all the time he is calling on our emotions to make us want certain things to happen, he is insisting that we understand the symbolic meanings. We want Yvette to triumph, but we must first understand what her triumph means. It is the triumph of the individual over the mass, and of a finer over a grosser morality. We are made to care about the ideas because of and through our emotional response to the characters.

In The Secret Sharer Joseph Conrad, as I have earlier stated, makes us care about Leggatt's fate. After hearing Leggatt speak for himself and after hearing the Sephora captain's version of the incident, we want the captain to save Leggatt. We want the captain to do the right thing not just for Leggatt's sake, but for the Captain's sake, and for our sake. For our sake, I say, because our interest in Leggatt is more than an academic interest in seeing justice done. The source of the emotional involvement here is the intense sense of identification our narrator feels and which we, as readers, find ourselves also feeling. As the captain/narrator identifies more and more with Leggatt, we do as well. And as compassion and understanding are integral to the moral of this story, our compassion for Leggatt is central to our appreciation of this moral.

Not only has the Twentieth-Century moral fable become more emotionally involving than say its Eighteenth-Century predecessor, it has moved away from the kind of simplified generalizations we once associated with this form. The moral fables examined here are exemplary of a new kind of fable which confronts the complexities and ambiguities

of the times. Whereas once the moral fable might have been a vehicle for "formulable statements," it now illustrates the failure of a morality based on any such simplifications. Hence, the moral fable frequently presents us with a resolution which we find difficult to accept, disturbing, possibly frightening. This again is part of its function: life itself is frequently difficult to accept, disturbing, and frightening. But the moral response is to confront such difficulties, not to evade them by complacent reliance on comfortable platitudes.

One may speak about what the moral fable is and what it does, but ultimately one must attempt to determine what a writer means by "moral." In the case of these three writers, it clearly refers to "the individual life in its essential and inescapable relations with others."[3] The three moral fables discussed here explore the difficulties of achieving the proper balance between individuality and relations with others.

John Marcher is a man who fails to find this balance. He is obsessed with his own individuality, that is, with his own fate detached from "others," and it is his "inner detachment" which defines the failure of his life. As Conrad puts it, "A man's real life is that accorded to him in the thoughts of other men by reason of respect or natural love."[4] Marcher deprived his life of meaning when he denied May's love. His failure to commit himself to their relationship resulted in the failure of his life. The story ends with Marcher's partial recognition of this as he makes a final and futile attempt to attach himself to May by throwing himself on her grave.

The significance of Marcher's egotism becomes greater in the context of James's definition of "moral": "The 'moral' sense of a work of art is the amount of felt life in producing it."[5] So we might say,

according to James, the "moral" sense of a man's life is to be found in the amount of felt life he experiences in living it. Marcher doesn't feel his life, and for this reason, his life has no moral sense, no meaning. And how does one feel life? The same way one feels anything: through contact. Marcher cannot feel because he is too self-absorbed to make contact with, or attach himself to, anybody or anything outside of himself. If a moral sense depends on "direct impressions" of life, then it begins with being able to feel, to receive these "direct impressions." Preoccupation with one's self makes one impervious to these impressions.

Sometimes "others" can prevent an individual from feeling, as D.H. Lawrence shows in The Virgin and the Gipsy. For Lawrence as well, morality is associated with "direct impressions," or "original feelings," as against "second-hand" impressions.[6] Yvette wants desperately to feel, as we hear in her wistful cry, "I should like to fall violently in love." The gipsy represents this "violence" or intensity of feeling. Yvette's perception of him is described as "penetrating . . . into some deep, secret place, and shooting her there."[7] What stands in the way between Yvette and the gipsy is the outdated, "second-hand," false morality represented by Granny, the Rector, and the Eastwoods. In order to be able to feel, then, one has to detach onself from such nullifying elements. When Yvette finally reaches out to the gipsy, it is, significantly, for his warmth, for his physical contact.

The gipsy helps her to "get rid of the old," and thereby open herself to the world of perception. He helps her to break away from the old, false morality and to be more receptive to the experiences of life.

The implications at the end of this tale are that Yvette will have better relations with those around her, her family and friends, as a result of her experience with the gipsy.

In The Secret Sharer, individuality and commitment become a matter of "individual moral judgment"; and Joseph Conrad's fable revolves around the difficulty and importance of achieving this. The captain's commitment to Leggatt is based (as much of the fable's symbolism is) on his ability to identify (identification being an intense form of awareness) with the fugitive. The captain puts himself in the other man's position, he listens to him, and he understands him. But his fierce determination to save Leggatt is based on more than ego-transference. By conscientiously evaluating the facts as they are presented to him, the captain recognizes the justice and necessity of saving Leggatt. Leggatt, the individual, must be saved, because he represents that which saves the human community, as represented by the crew of the Sephora. The paradoxical relationship between independence and commitment, as defined in The Secret Sharer, offers us the most complete statement of the basis of morality defined by the "individual life in its essential and inescapable relations with others": think for yourself, of others.

If morality begins with consciousness, then the function of the moral fable is to stimulate consciousness, to make us feel more. I would, therefore, like to conclude by returning to Joseph Conrad's statement which describes the power of fiction to "[endow] passing events with their true meaning. . . ." Fiction has been often separated into either mimetic (representative) or didactic (illustrative) types; and the moral fable has been put in the latter category. This

classification is misleading and reductive, as it is based on the notion that life is "plotless"; and the highly structured plot of the fable makes it seem less than realistic or representative. But life is not plotless. It is a series of events, complete with cause and effect, and only becomes "plotless" when we fail to see the significance of its events and the relationship between causes and effects. Denial of significance is denial of responsibility for this relationship, and as such, is immoral. The moral fable is a fiction which seeks to remind us of the significance of our lives and our actions, and which encourages us to take responsibility for them. It is, therefore, <u>not</u> unrealistic, or simply illustrative, but entirely representative, in the fullest sense.

NOTES

[1] Q.D. Leavis, "Intro.," Silas Marner, by George Eliot (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 14.

[2] Mary Doyl Springer, Forms of the Modern Novella (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 116.

[3] F.R. Leavis, D.H. Lawrence, Novelist (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 178.

[4] Joseph Conrad, Under Western Eyes (London: The Gresham Publishing Co. Ltd., 1925), p.14.

[5] Henry James, The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 45.

[6] D.H. Lawrence, "Pornography and Obscentiy," Selected Literary Criticism, ed., Anthony Beal (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), pp. 34-35.

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